sojourners

December 2011 | www.sojo.net

Faith in Action for Social Justice

CELEBRATING 40 YEARS

A SLEEPING GIANT AWAKENS

The Occupy movement rekindles hope from New York to Seattle and around the world. What's next?

CHANGE *a life* THIS CHRISTMAS, HELP PREPARE *the way*

This Christmas give to help prepare the way for the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) to respond to needs around the world. When you give to One Great Hour of Sharing, you underwrite UMCOR's costs of doing business, allowing 100% of designated gifts to emergencies and other projects to be used for those causes.

You can prepare the way for life-changing work to begin.

GIVE ONLINE TODAY

One Great Hour of Sharing: www.umcgiving.org/giveOGHS.

Help Prepare the Way.

UMCOR United Methodist Committee On Relief • One Great Hour of Sharing

Be There. Be Hope.

Cover photo of an Occupy Seattle protest/Reuters

contents

DECEMBER 2011 Vol. 40 | No. 11

COVER

7 An Open Letter to Occupy Wall Street
You have awakened a sleeping giant ...
by Jim Wallis

44 American Spring?
The Occupy movement asks: Can politics be made new?
by Robert Hirschfield

FEATURES

16 Seven Ways Home
How to put decent housing within reach.
by Jill Shook

20 Monasteries of the Heart
A vibrant Benedictine spirituality for our time.
by Joan Chittister, OSB

24 Which Side Are You On?
A study on the Bible's "two religions."
by Wes Howard-Brook

28 A Mason of Peace
An interview with Father Nabil Haddad of Jordan.

32 From Patriarchy to Partnership
The far-reaching power of egalitarian marriage.
by Helen LaKelly Hunt

CULTURE WATCH

46 Eyes & Ears, by Danny Duncan Collum
47 On Film, by Gareth Higgins
49 Reviews: *Mighty Be Our Powers; And Still Peace Did Not Come; All is Grace.* Excerpt*: Left, Right, & Christ*

COMMENTARY

8 Advent
9 Drug patents
10 Out of Iraq?

DEPARTMENTS

5 Letters
36 Poetry
56 Living the Word
by Enuma Okoro

COLUMNS

12 Deep Economy
by Bill McKibben

14 Earth & Heaven
by Joel Hunter

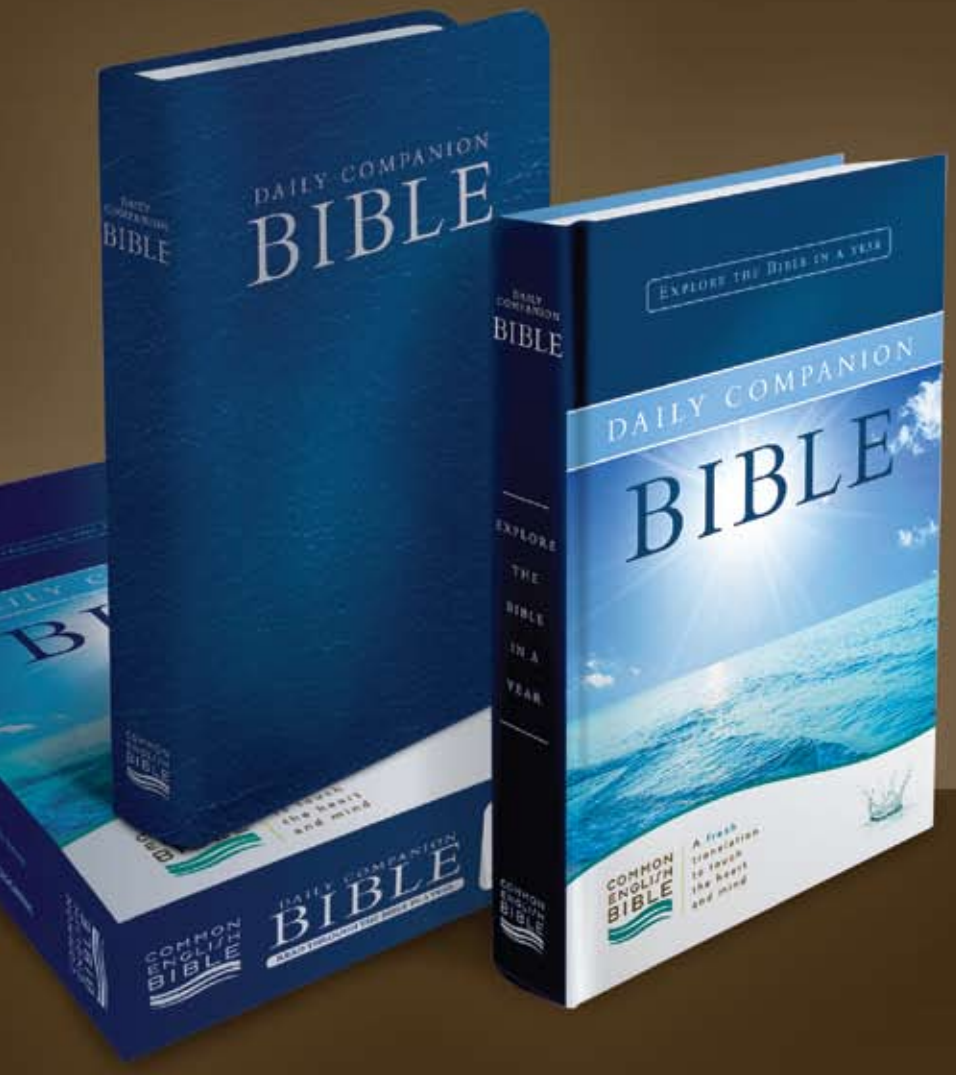
43 The Hungry Spirit
by Rose Marie Berger

58 H'rumphs
by Ed Spivey Jr.

COMMON ENGLISH BIBLE

INTRODUCING THE COMMON ENGLISH

DAILY COMPANION BIBLE



LIVE THE COMMON GROUND EVERY DAY

The Common English Daily Companion Bible provides a one-year spiritual growth plan to help people discover how the Bible applies to daily life. This fresh, topical approach focuses on 52 common themes within the core areas of Faith Foundations, Character Development, and Spiritual Discipline.

*The versatile, two-part format—reading selections in the front followed by the full **Common English Bible** text—allows readers to follow a year-long reading plan through spiritual topics that are pertinent to daily growth in the faith.*

FEATURES:

- 260 Scripture readings with devotional commentary—5 for each week of the year, including 30-day, 90-day, and 365-day plans
- Space for personal reflection
- Ribbon marker
- Presentation page
- In-text subject headings
- 8 pages of full-color maps from NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC

The **Common English Bible** is the first translation built by a community for the community.

120 BIBLE TRANSLATORS FROM **24** DENOMINATIONS COLLABORATED WITH OVER **500** BIBLE READERS FROM DIVERSE BACKGROUNDS AND **100s** OF DIFFERENT CHURCHES...

...to produce a balanced, accurate, sensitive, and readable translation.

BUILT ON COMMON GROUND

CommonEnglishBible.com

@CommonEngBible

EVEN WHILE Occupy Wall Street and the worldwide movement it has helped ignite captured the public's attention this fall, some observers claimed not to understand what the protests were all about. They wanted a clear list of demands, or a detailed plan for fixing what ails our economy and our society in general.

Many of the attacks on the Occupy protests seemed a bit disingenuous. After all, it's pretty much impossible to deny the destructive role played by an under-regulated financial sector—that would be the "Wall Street" that's being occupied—in sparking the Great Recession. But the transgressions of Wall Street itself are really only the tip of the filthy-lucre iceberg, as the gap between the super-wealthy and the rest has grown to titanic proportions. The statistics, which should serve as icons for our reflection and enlightenment—they're that crucial—tell a heartbreaking story. What does it mean when the country's top 1 percent has more wealth than the bottom 90 percent? It means that many, many people are suffering, while (and because) a very few thrive.

In his open letter to the Occupiers, Jim Wallis encourages the protesters to deepen their understanding of, and their commitment to, nonviolence, and he points to the fundamental importance of spiritual resources for such a movement. And in our CultureWatch section, Robert Hirschfield visits the New York demonstrations and sees connections with nonviolent efforts across the globe, particularly the Arab Spring actions in the Middle East. Hirschfield reports that those gathered understand that their actions are intricately connected with efforts to end the U.S. wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, and with other anti-corruption and anti-poverty efforts at home and abroad. And that work—such as the efforts for affordable housing outlined by Jill Shook in our lead feature—are indeed part of the same phenomena, a movement for justice that faith-based people have engaged in for thousands of years. We've known it as "occupying" the Kingdom of God. ■

Letters

FAITH AND PEACE

Your article on Heartsong Church and the Memphis Islamic Center ("Peace Be Upon Them," by Bob Smietana, September-October 2011) reminded me of the power and the responsibilities of those raised in the common Abrahamic traditions. Thank you for repeating the uplifting story.

If it is true that peace is the goal of these traditions, then we have to continue to work together to stop our children from entering the official military and the paramilitary in order to kill each other in the name of our common Creator. During the Vietnam War there was a thoughtful saying: "What if they gave a war and nobody came?" Let's work together to keep our children out of the tentacles of the military mindset and actions. That way, when the rich want to have a war in order to get richer, no one will come.

Catherine Foley
Taylor Lake Village, Texas

GETTING THE SHORT STRAW

Your excellent article on the good work being done by ECHO ("Ending the Hunger Season," by Fred Bahnson, August 2011) was marred by its stringent [implied] criticism of the millions of small family farmers who feed the world, of whom I am one. Norman Borlaug, whom you cite, reduced the height of wheat from over five feet to two feet and thereby brought about a trebling of yields. Rice breeders followed his example, and with these far more efficient plants the world's farmers have been able to keep the world's exploding, meat-eating, urban dwelling population alive for the past 50 years. A return to the traditional plants would spell hunger for billions.

> "It is the world's 3.5 billion urban people who flush 'massive amounts of nutrients' down their toilets."

Borlaug did not produce "hybrid varieties" (of which seed has to be bought every year). He produced plants of which farmers could keep their seed and pass it on to their neighbors. Neither do these plants "suck massive amounts of nutrients from the soil"; because of their short size, they are almost twice as efficient at converting plant nutrients into grain. It is the world's 3.5 billion urban people who "suck massive amounts of nutrients from the soil" and flush them down their toilets. Farmers are forced to find some alternative source for the nutrients they have lost; in the quantities now involved, only fertilizer can meet that need for most of us.

We have kept billions of people alive in the face of an unprecedented population explosion and have fed the billions of animals which they demand. This has involved us and our families in increased work, risk, expenditure, and worry.

Can the world go on feeding itself in this way? Of course not! By midcentury there will be 10 billion people, most draining the world's soil nutrients down their toilets at a speed it will be impossible to replace as the supply of the phosphate rock and potash salt, on which we now draw as a replacement, runs out. With the help of short-strawed varieties, farmers have kept billions of people alive until some quite new way is found of feeding this huge, meat-eating, urban population. People like ECHO are helping in that task; it is going to need many more like them.

Stephen Carr
Malakamu Village, Zomba, Malawi

CORRECTION: Father Jacek Orzechowski's name was misspelled in our November 2011 issue. We apologize for the error.

***Letters**, Sojourners, 3333 14th St. NW, Suite 200, Washington, DC 20010 or letters@sojo.net. Include your name, city, and state. Letters may be edited.*

sojourners

Chief Executive Officer/Editor-in-Chief, Jim Wallis
Chief of Staff, Joan M. Bisset
Vice President and Chief Financial Officer, Michael Norman
Vice President and Chief Advancement Officer, Robert Wilson-Black
Chief Administrative Officer, Karen L. Lattea
Senior Policy Adviser, Duane Shank

Editor, Jim Rice
Art Director, Ed Spivey Jr.
Associate Editors, Rose Marie Berger, Elizabeth Palmberg, Julie Polter

Chief Marketing Officer, Syieda Penn
Director of Circulation and Production, Cynthia J. Martens
Director of Advertising Sales, Kierra A. Jackson
Advertising Sales Associate, Stacey Schwenker

Director of Foundation Relations, Lisa Daughtry-Weiss
Director of Major Gifts, Larisa Friesen Hall
Interim Director of Individual Giving, Leslie Abell
Development Associate, Emanuel Figueroa Marrero
Assistant Director of Major Gifts, Luke Horner
Web Editor and Director of New Media, Cathleen Falsani
Web Technologist, Bob Sabath
Associate Web Developer, Heather Wilson
Director of Campaigns, Elizabeth Denlinger Reaves
Director of Mobilizing, Lisa Sharon Harper
Office Manager/Receptionist, Abayea Pelt
Speaking Events Manager, Sondra F. Shepley
Accountant, Brion Thomas
Administrative Director, Amber Hill
Communications Director, Tim King
Media Affairs Associate, Carrie E. Adams

Interns: Jessie Choi, *Advertising*; James Colten, *Campaigns*; Parker Haaga, *Marketing and Circulation*; Nicole Higgins, *Executive*; Jack Palmer, *Media*; Elisabeth Preisinger, *Development*; Anne Marie Roderick, *Editorial*; Karla T. Vasquez, *Mobilizing*; Joshua Stephen Witchger, *Online*

Contributing Editors: Diana Butler Bass, Daniel Berrigan, Melvin Bray, Walter Brueggemann, Majora Carter, Joan Chittister, Eugene Cho, Shane Claiborne, Danny Duncan Collum, Edwidge Danticat, Marie Dennis, John DiIulio, E.J. Dionne Jr., Valerie Elverton Dixon, Wes Granberg-Michaelson, Adam Hamilton, Vincent Harding, Obery Hendricks, Gareth Higgins, Joel Hunter, Lynne Hybels, Daisy Khan, Anne Lamott, Bill McKibben, Brian McLaren, Donald Miller, Ched Myers, Eboo Patel, John Perkins, Samuel Rodriguez, Richard Rohr, Ron Sider, Barbara Brown Taylor, Cornel West, Lauren Winner, Valerie Weaver-Zercher, Tyler Wigg Stevenson, Bill Wylie-Kellermann

Contributing Writers: Onleilove Alston, Frida Berrigan, Michaela Bruzzese, Kimberly Burge, Judy Coode, David Cortright, Aaron McCarroll Gallegos, Bob Hulteen, Celeste Kennel-Shank, Jesse Nathan, Glen Stassen, Andrew Wilkes, Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove, Kari Jo Verhulst

Sojourners (ISSN 0364-2097) is published monthly, except September-October is combined, at 3333 14th St. NW, Suite 200, Washington, DC 20010. Periodicals Postage Paid at Washington, D.C., and additional mailing offices. Canadian Publications Sales Agreement #257494. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Sojourners, PO Box 48, Congers, NY 10920-9856.

Sojourners Online: sojourners@sojo.net • www.sojo.net
Free weekly SojoMail: subscribe@sojo.net

BY JIM WALLIS

An Open Letter to Occupy Wall Street

YOU HAVE AWAKENED the sleeping giant, too long dormant but ever present, deep in the American democratic spirit. You have given voice to the unspoken feelings of countless others that something has gone terribly wrong in our society. And you have sparked a flame from the embers of both frustration and hope that have been building, steadily, in the hearts of so many of us for quite some time.

Throughout history, that task, which sometimes means saying and doing what others only think, has often fallen to young people. You have articulated, loudly and clearly, the internal monologue of a nation.

Some of you have told me that you expected only to foment a short-lived protest and that you were as surprised by this "movement" as anyone else. While there are some who may misunderstand your motives and message, know that you are an inspiration to many more.

Nonviolence is not just a critical tactic but a necessary commitment.

One of you told me in New York City that you are trying to build something in Liberty Park that you aspire to create for our global village—a more cooperative society. I asked one of the non-leaders who helped lead the first days of the Occupation what most drew him to get involved, and he replied, "I want to have children someday, and this is becoming a world not good for children." It is precisely those deepest, most authentic feelings and motivations that should preoccupy you.

You are raising very basic questions about an economy that has become increasingly unfair and unsustainable for a growing number of people. Those same questions are being asked by many others—even by some at the top of the economic pecking order. Keep pressing those values questions, because they will move people more than a set of demands or policy suggestions. Those can come later.

Try not to demonize those you view as opponents, as good people can get trapped in bad systems. Still, you are right for saying that we all must be held accountable, both systems and the individuals within them. The new safe spaces you have created to ask fundamental questions are helping to carve out fresh societal space to examine ourselves—who we are, what we value most, and where we want to go from here.

Instead of simply attacking the establishment economists, you can become the citizen economists, like the young economics major I met at the Wall Street occupation who discussed with me new approaches for society's investment and innovation. We desperately need new vision like hers to come up with alternative ways of performing essential functions.

Keep asking what a "just economy" should look like and whom it should be for. They are noble questions. But avoid utopian dreaming about things that will never happen. Look instead at how we could do things differently, more responsibly, more equitably, and yes, more democratically.

Don't be afraid to get practical and specific about how we can and must do things better than we have in recent years. You have begun a conversation about what markets could and should be. Even in forums where business and political leaders meet, they too are asking those questions and using terms such as "moral economy" as a way to interrogate our present failed practices. Keep driving both the moral and practical questions about the economics of our local and global households, for that is what the discipline was supposed to be about in the first place.

I know you believe that leaders on Wall Street and in Washington, D.C., have failed you. Indeed, they have failed us all. But don't give up on leadership per se. We need innovative leadership now more than ever. And you are providing some of it.

And remember, nonviolence is not just a critical tactic but a necessary commitment to moral and civil discourse that can awaken the best in all of us. There is much to be angry about, but channeling that energy into creative, nonviolent action is the only way to prevent dangerous cynicism and nihilism. The anarchism of anger has never produced the change that the discipline and constructive program of nonviolent movements have done again and again.

Cultivate humility more than overconfidence or self-indulgence. This really is not about you. It's about the marginalized masses, the signs of the times, and the profound yearning for lasting change. Take that larger narrative more seriously than you take yourselves.

Finally, do not let go of your hope. Popular movements are the only forces that truly bring about change in society. The established order is never as secure and impervious to change as those who preside over it believe it to be.

And whatever you may think of organized religion, keep in mind that change requires spiritual as well as political resources, and that invariably any new economy will be accompanied by a new (or very old) spirituality.

May God be gracious to you and give you—and all of us—peace. ■

***Jim Wallis** is editor-in-chief of* Sojourners. *A longer version of this letter can be found on sojo.net.*

By Julie Polter

'Say, Say the Light'

Advent loops past the second coming to the first—and to us, stuck waiting in the mud of existence.

EVERY FEW YEARS I rediscover a song by R.E.M., "You are the Everything." It juxtaposes despair over the state of things ("Sometimes I feel like I can't even sing / I'm very scared for this world") with deceptively simple memories: A starry sky. The sensations of a random moment long ago. The feel of our own bodies. The sight of someone beloved ("I look at her and I see the beauty / of the light of music").

This song gives me cathartic comfort when the news seems too much to bear. It doesn't erase famine, wars, rumors of wars, a friend's bad pathology report, or my concern

Incarnation—whose ridiculous idea of a divine save is this?

over the body politic. But *my* position shifts; I anchor myself to the beauty of creation, to the miracle of being an embodied soul, to the fragile graces of human relationship, and to the One who brought it all into being. Thin guy wires of memory and spirit steady me against sweeping currents of events, so that I can focus on them, yet not drown.

This tension, between the cares of the world and transcendence, for me typifies Advent. The scriptures recount woe and warnings of the end times. Can we not, in our time, relate to the words of Isaiah about his time, his people? "We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a filthy cloth. We all fade like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away" (Isaiah 64:6). Can we watch YouTube videos of tsunami surges and noncombatants in the crosshairs, crumpling as the bullets hit, and not be able to imagine, at least a little: "But in those days, after that suffering, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will be falling

At Last

The Martin Luther King Jr. National Memorial was dedicated on Oct. 16 on the National Mall in Washington, D.C., making it the first such memorial to commemorate an African-American leader. The $120-million sculpture design echoes King's "I Have A Dream" speech delivered at the 1963 March on Washington For Jobs and Freedom, in which he said, "With this faith, we will be able to hew out of the mountain of despair a stone of hope."

Heather Wilson

from heaven, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken" (Mark 13:24-25)? Maybe we relate to why so many generations of believers could long for this, the ultimate clean slate: "the heavens will be set ablaze and dissolved, and the elements will melt with fire" (2 Peter 3:12).

Michael Stipe sings, "I think about this world a lot and I cry / And I've seen the films and the eyes." The world is ending, every day, for many—fading into dark as life is starved out of them, blasted away by an IED or drone attack. One answer to the woe is to make it all go away. Stop the madness, permanently.

But Advent ultimately loops past the second coming to the first, in which we, very much stuck in the mud of existence, await the promised Lord. Only God doesn't come, as we might expect, to wipe away the muck of this world and lift us up in angelic robes to a cleaner, truer place. Rather, God comes down to us, down and dirty, into the fray, into the civil wars and demonstrations, the conspiracies and the petty fights, into a body, frail and intricately knit, just like mine or yours. Jesus will be a refugee, a working man; he will live under occupation (he might be occupying Wall Street). His feet will be dusty, and probably sometimes his breath will stink. Incarnation—whose ridiculous idea of a divine save is this?

God created the heavens and the earth and declared them good. After we made a mess of things, Jesus came down and is with us. Here. He's here, in the films and the videos, among the haunted eyes, looking at us, demanding that we not look away. And he's here, as a songwriter remembers an ordinary moment, in an ordinary kitchen, and observes, "Everything is beautiful."

I don't pretend to make sense of this scandal of incarnation. I only hope to testify to the One who came, and go where Jesus goes: everywhere, to the beauty, to the suffering. ■

***Julie Polter** is an associate editor of* Sojourners.

By Peter Maybarduk

We Paid for Them

The U.S. should put publicly funded medicines in reach of the world's poor.

IN THE LATE 1980s, while fear and prejudice stymied global progress against the AIDS pandemic, the National Institutes of Health (NIH) launched a publicly funded program to translate basic HIV research into lifesaving medicines.

One grant went to a team led by John Erickson at Abbott Laboratories, where, in his words, it "catalyzed the development of [Abbott's] antiviral program" at a time when such efforts "were largely nonexistent in the pharmaceutical industry." The government money "facilitated the research that led directly to the development" of ritonavir—one of the most important HIV medicines to date. Ritonavir, taken in combination with other HIV medicines, makes them more effective. It's a key treatment for people who have developed resistance to first-line drugs.

In many countries Abbott patented ritonavir and numerous variations; one of Abbott's patents for a combination product will not expire until 2026. Despite the public's investment, Abbott aggressively asserts a high-priced monopoly around the world, charging many times what generics would cost. (In some of the few countries where ritonavir combinations are not patented—through Abbott's inaction or the government's refusal—a combination drug runs only about $450 per year.)

The biggest problem: Abbott's patents and prices prevent economies of scale in generic drug production and donor purchasing, restricting the world's ability to improve HIV treatment and prevention in countries from Vietnam to Colombia. What's more, Abbott's behavior discourages development of lifesaving combination therapies that bundle the drug with non-Abbott HIV medicines.

The U.S. government is the world's leading funder of medical research—but, as with ritonavir, pharmaceutical companies typically gain exclusive rights to the medicines that result. Countless lives could be saved if such publicly funded inventions could be

sojourners

Our Mission
The mission of *Sojourners* magazine is to inspire hope and action by articulating the biblical call to racial and social justice, life and peace, and environmental stewardship.

Business and Editorial Address
Please send all business and editorial correspondence to Sojourners, 3333 14th Street NW, Suite 200, Washington, DC 20010.

Subscription and Change of Address
SUBSCRIBERS: Please print change of address on a card with old address label attached; send all subscription correspondence and address changes (except countries listed below) to Sojourners, PO Box 48, Congers, NY 10920-9856, or email us at sojourners@cambeywest.com (allow six weeks to process any address change). POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Sojourners, PO Box 48, Congers, NY 10920-9856.

Subscription Rates
U.S.: $39.95 one year (for first class mail, $50). **Australia:** $78 one year (via air mail, paid in Australian currency, and sent to MediaCom, PO Box 610, Unley 5061 SA). **New Zealand:** $97 one year (via air mail, paid in New Zealand currency, and sent to MediaCom, PO Box 9483, Wellington, NZ); email admin@mediacom.org.au. **UK and Ireland:** UK £30, IR £41 payable to Sojourners UK, and sent to Sojourners UK, 61 Axwell Park View, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, NE15 6NR; email Pam Swift at pam.swift@live.co.uk. **All other foreign surface** (six to eight weeks delivery overseas): $49.95 one year. **All other air service overseas** (one to two weeks delivery): $59.95 one year. Except where noted, payable in U.S. currency.

Newsstand Circulation
Newsstand circulation through Disticor Magazine Distribution Services. For more information, call (905) 619-6565, fax (905) 619-2903, or email mraucci@disticor.com.

Advertising
Advertisement in *Sojourners* does not imply editorial endorsement. For information on display advertising in *Sojourners,* please write to: Advertising, Sojourners, 3333 14th Street NW, Suite 200, Washington, DC 20010; advertising@sojo.net; or visit www.sojo.net.

Submissions
Please direct poetry to the Poetry Editor (postal mail only, address below); books, music, and reviews to the Review Editor by post or at reviews@sojo.net; and query letters (400 words or fewer) for all other suggested articles to the Manuscript Editor by post or at queries@sojo.net. Please enclose a self-addressed stamped envelope with postal submissions. Full writers guidelines: www.sojo.net/writers.

Printed in the U.S.A. on recycled paper.

All content copyright ©2011 Sojourners

3333 14th Street NW, Suite 200
Washington, DC 20010
Phone (202) 328-8842

From the Archives

December 1981

A Saint for Today

IF EVER THE 20th century has been given a key to the secret of wisdom in a crazy world, it is in Francis of Assisi. But so distorted are our values, so limited our vision, so self-centered our society that it's Francis who comes out looking mad. His own society, even his own father, thought he'd lost his mind. ...

As a youngster in the local Catholic school, I learned that Francis gave up a high position in the army and the family business to live with the poor ... I had already learned from subtler sources that the purpose of life was to get ahead, to buy things, to be patriotic, to be independent and proper and strong. Now I'm beginning to understand, I think: While we're all talking wisdom in this wasted, wacky, warring world, Francis of Assisi is a key to understanding it that nobody wants. ...

We need Francis badly, but you can't help but wonder if he'd be accepted now. He was so deeply embedded in the gospel that he was out of step with everything else, and that was enough for him. He spent his life gearing down instead of moving up, a most un-American thing. He was foolish enough to be happy with nothing and promote it for others. In a macho, medieval world he was the radiant embodiment of the feminine. He was soft, and caring and loving and unashamed. But this world still derides all of that, to its own peril. ■

Joan Chittister, OSB, *was prioress of the Benedictine Sisters of Erie and a contributing editor to* Sojourners *when this article appeared.*

made available in low-cost generic form for humanitarian use in developing countries.

And indeed they could be. The U.S. government has rights under existing law to license patented medical inventions, if their research had federal sponsorship, to international organizations. For example, if the Obama administration chooses, it can make licenses for ritonavir available to the newly created nonprofit Medicines Patent Pool, the World Health Organization, and UNICEF. Generic competition could then reduce the global price. Exercising these rights would not authorize generic competition in wealthy countries or override Abbott's patents; it would simply help meet humanitarian needs through a now-dormant government authority.

These federal rights are not new, but the U.S. has never exercised them. The Clinton and Bush administrations declined, citing companies' monopoly expectations as important to encouraging drug research. This line of argument seems particularly strained when applied to medical inventions sparked by federal grants: Current U.S. policy amounts to public subsidies for private pharmaceutical monopolies.

In fact, in the case of ritonavir, exclusive patent licensing has most likely *stifled* combination drug development. A better explanation for government reluctance to use NIH medical licensing rights may be the political power of the pharmaceutical industry.

This fall, a coalition of nonprofit organizations, including Public Citizen, Knowledge Ecology International, Doctors Without Borders, Oxfam America, and many others, asked the administration to fulfill Obama's pre-election pledge to "support the adoption of humanitarian licensing policies that ensure medications developed with U.S. taxpayer dollars are available off-patent in developing countries."

The time is right for a change. Over the past 10 years, generic competition has spurred a revolution, reducing costs of the first HIV drugs by 99 percent and enabling 6 million people in low- and middle-income countries to access lifesaving medicine. Humanitarian licensing could produce a similar effect for patented second-line HIV drugs such as ritonavir, as well as for federally sponsored cancer treatments and more.

It will take a citizens' movement to overcome the pharmaceutical industry's influence. The co-signatories of the humanitarian licensing request comprise an unprecedented coalition and an important step toward a much stronger "global access to medicines" movement. Perhaps when we lead, our leaders will follow. ■

Peter Maybarduk *is Global Access to Medicines Program director at Public Citizen (citizen.org/access) in Washington, D.C.*

By Phyllis Bennis

A Stunning Victory

U.S. troops will finally withdraw from Iraq—but what about the contractors?

NEAR THE END of George Bush's eight years in the White House, the president and his Iraqi counterpart, Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki, shared a big problem. Both of them wanted U.S. troops to stay in Iraq, but both faced widespread domestic opposition to the U.S. occupation.

Feeling the heat, they settled on a "status of forces agreement" (SOFA) calling for full withdrawal of all 150,000 or so U.S. troops and all Pentagon-paid contractors by Dec. 31. In his first 18 months in office, President Obama did significantly reduce the numbers of troops in Iraq, down to about 50,000 by August 2010. But there it stuck. A year later, more than 40,000 U.S. troops were still occupying Iraq. The number of Pentagon-paid contractors still there was even higher—as of March, more than 64,000.

Even worse, the Obama administration continued to pressure the weak and corrupt Iraqi government to renegotiate the SOFA and "invite" the U.S. to keep troops in Iraq for the foreseeable future: a permanent occupation in all but name.

At the end of the day, none of those efforts worked. The official reason for not agreeing to keep 5,000 to 10,000 troops in Iraq was the refusal of the Iraqi government to guarantee U.S. soldiers immunity from criminal prosecution, but the real reason was that anti-war public opinion in Iraq and the U.S. was simply

too strong. Al-Maliki certainly hoped some U.S. troops would remain, to help his unpopular government stay in power; Obama was under pressure from some in the Pentagon determined not to "lose" the supposed "gains" the occupation had achieved. But neither Iraq's parliament nor the American people were prepared to allow thousands of U.S. soldiers to continue occupying Iraq. It was a stunning victory for those who have fought for peace all these years.

But. We're not out of the woods entirely. Remember those contractors? Turns out the SOFA drafters were cleverer than anyone

The U.S. role in Iraq has shrunk, but it isn't over.

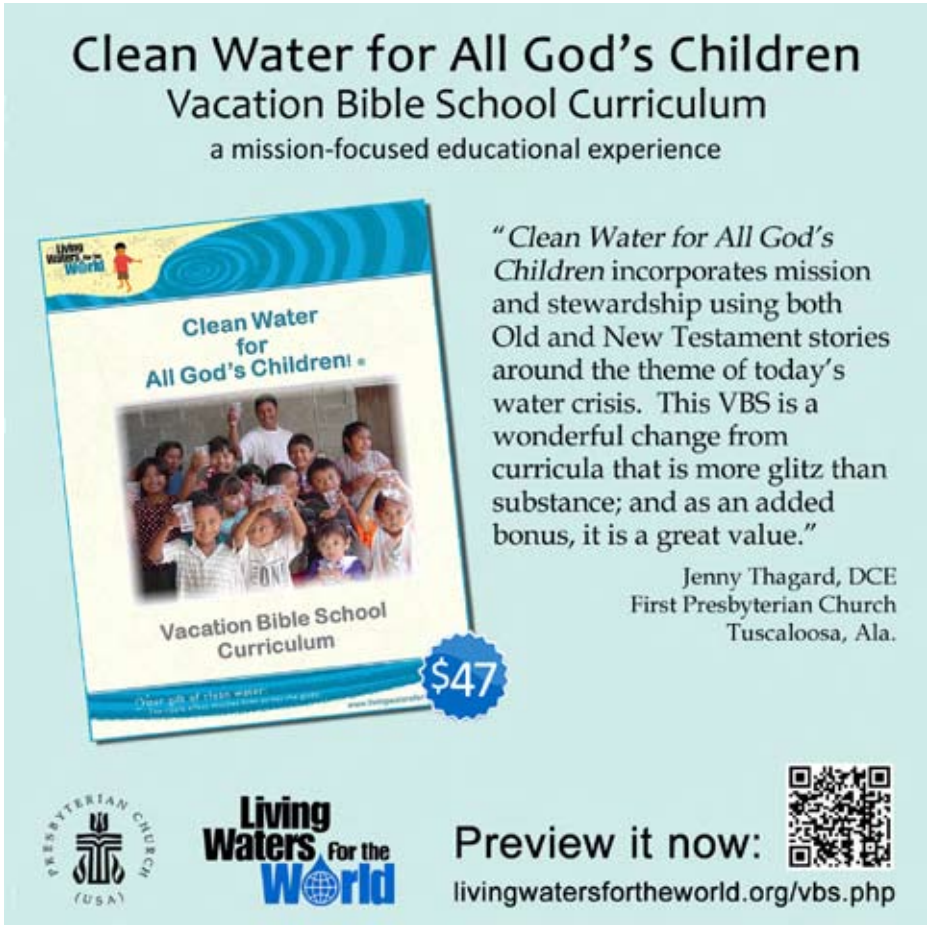
knew. The agreement said all Pentagon-paid military contractors had to leave by the end of this year, but didn't mention those paid by the State Department. So guess which U.S. government agency is taking over the check-writing to pay thousands of U.S.-hired mercenaries to stay in Iraq for the long haul?

President Obama campaigned on a promise to end the war in Iraq, calling it a "dumb war." So why did his administration try so hard to continue the occupation? It seems the strategic reasons that began during the Bush administration—the real causes underneath the fallacious claims that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction or responsibility for 9/11—didn't go away. Control of oil contracts, strategic reach in a vital region, access to bases, surrounding Iran: All remain operative, whoever is in the White House.

The war cost way too much in Iraqi and U.S. deaths and in our tax dollars. We paid almost $50 billion just this year for this war. That's enough to provide health care for 24 million children for a year, or to create and fund new, green jobs for a million workers—maybe including those thousands of soldiers supposed to be on their way home.

The U.S. role in the Iraq war has gotten smaller, but it sure isn't over. We need to bring home all U.S. personnel and dollars. It's really "dumb" if we don't. And we still can't afford dumb wars. ■

Phyllis Bennis *is a fellow of the Institute for Policy Studies and author of* Ending the Iraq War: A Primer.

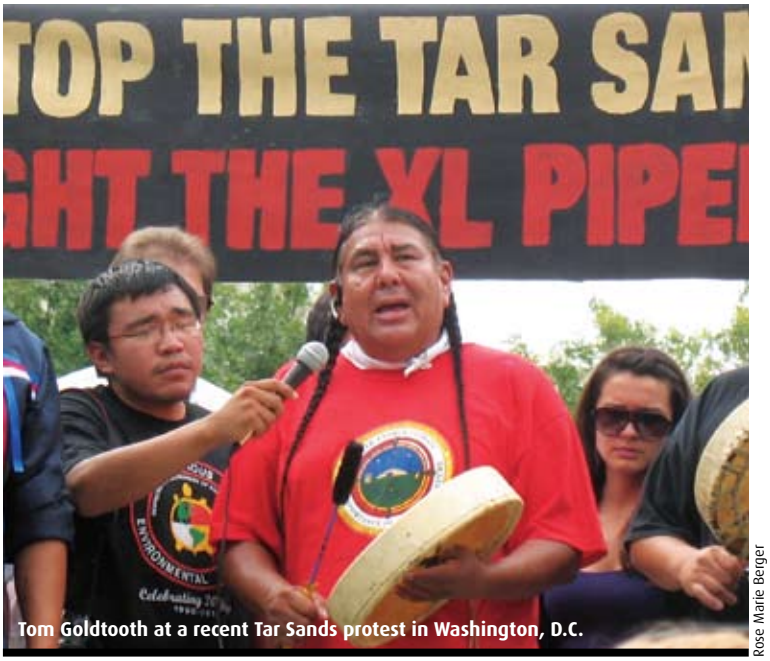


BY BILL McKIBBEN

The Roots of the Tar Sands Movement

SOME OF US helped organize a massive display of civil disobedience outside the White House earlier this fall, protesting a proposed pipeline from the tar sands of northern Alberta to the Gulf of Mexico. It was a good two weeks of action—1,252 Americans ended up in jail, the largest and most sustained protest of its kind in decades. But the truth? We were Johnny-come-latelies to this movement. The real work had begun years before, and has been carried out by indigenous communities on both sides of the U.S.-Canadian border.

I knew just enough about the Alberta tar sands to know that the first person I should call when we started thinking about joining the protest was Tom Goldtooth, head of the Indigenous Environmental Network (IEN) and one of the most venerable and venerated environmental leaders in the country. I knew, vaguely, that he'd told me about this work before—even shown me pictures of the vast tribal lands and boreal forest wrecked by the early stages of mining for oil north of the border. But I'd never really followed up—there are lots of horrors in this world, who can pay attention to them all, excuse excuse blah blah excuse.



Tom Goldtooth at a recent Tar Sands protest in Washington, D.C.

Rose Marie Berger

The real work has been done for years by indigenous leaders on both sides of the border.

It was only when NASA scientist James Hansen explained what damage burning this vast pool of oil would do to the climate that it rose to the top of my priority list. (A lot of damage—"essentially game over for the climate" was how he put it.) And I'm glad it did, in part because it brought me more closely in touch with some of the greatest organizers on this continent.

Goldtooth, of course. But also Melina Laboucan-Massimo, a young Cree woman from the part of Alberta wrecked by this mining. I watched her give a PowerPoint presentation at a labor union meeting in a sterile conference room in Washington, D.C.—and I watched the union leaders who knew little about the specifics of the project see it suddenly through her eyes: the friends dying of cancer, the way of life dying as the forest disappeared. She was never sentimental; if anything, the opposite. But her heart shone through.

Or Bill Erasmus, chief of the Dene in northern Canada. Hard to imagine a more dignified man. He's served in this post for more than 20 years. "You're a politician?" I asked, teasing him a little. He looked at me. "No," he said. "A leader." Indeed. If he and his colleagues were open to it, the fossil fuel industry would be only too happy to buy them off—a small price to pay for shutting them up. Instead, the indigenous leaders have waged a highly successful battle to keep the oil companies from running a pipeline west to British Columbia, over First Nations land. (Canadian tribes may have more legal power than American ones; at any rate, they've completely stymied the big money guys.) That's one reason the oil companies want to build this pipeline south to Texas; if they can't get it through, in the words of Alberta's energy minister, they'll be "landlocked" in oil.

I don't know if we're going to win this battle—the money on the other side is truly awesome. It will be instructive to see if President Obama can do the right thing anyway. But if we *do* triumph, there's no question who the heroes are: the indigenous communities that have fought this fight hardest and longest. ■

***Bill McKibben**, author of* The End of Nature *and founder of 350.org, is initiator of Tar Sands Action (www.tarsandsaction.org).*

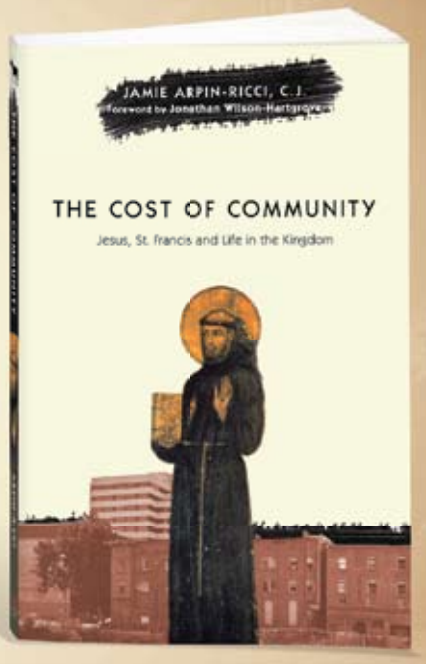
Join the Blessed.

Following the example of St. Francis of Assisi, Jamie Arpin-Ricci and his friends in the Little Flowers Community have sought to order their lives around a single teaching—the Sermon on the Mount. Jamie's reflections, rising out of this living, urban community, open a valuable new window onto the challenges and rewards of life in the kingdom.

"Jamie Arpin-Ricci's book invites you to follow Francis . . . away from the war drums and shopping malls, and into the streets and slums."

—**Shane Claiborne**, compiler of *Common Prayer*

978-0-8308-3635-2, $16.00



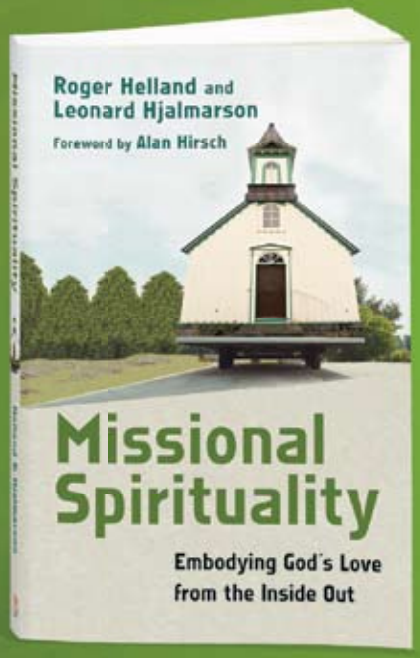
LIKEWISE. Go and do.

InterVarsity Press

likewisebooks.com
800.843.9487

New Directions for the Missional Church

978-0-8308-3807-3, $16.00



Roger Helland and Leonard Hjalmarson undertake to give the missional church movement its spiritual bearings. Our mission must first be headquartered in Christ, they argue, if we are to take God's love for the world from the inside out.

"Seldom will you find books on what we can call a missional spirituality—a spirituality for the road. . . . Roger Helland and Len Hjalmarson have gifted us with a red-hot text, one appropriate to the red-hot life we are called to live."

—From the foreword by **Alan Hirsch**

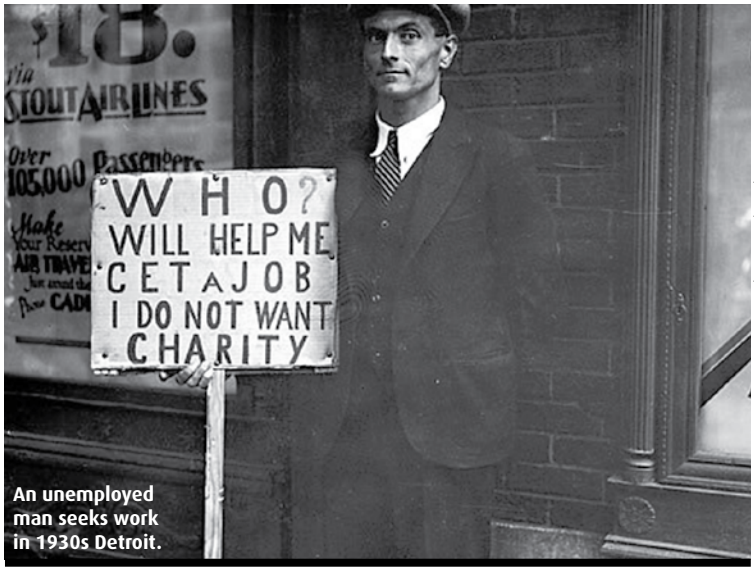
IVP Books *Think Deep. Live Smart.*

800.843.9487 • *ivpress.com*

BY JOEL C. HUNTER

United We Stand

WHEN I WAS growing up my grandparents talked often about going through the Great Depression. I heard about Wall Street investors jumping out of windows and about the poverty most folks feared and experienced. As kids, we were reassured that we came from the kind of people who don't give up, who go through a crisis and get closer to family and neighbor, and who possess a national pride about outlasting tough times. Gran and Pop would speak with some nostalgia about how everyone stuck together through that kind of poverty because everyone was struggling.



An unemployed man seeks work in 1930s Detroit.

Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University

My parents talked often about what it was like to go through World War II. Those conversations had the same kind of "everyone pitched in" tone because everyone was equally at risk.

But the recession we are going through now doesn't impact everyone in the same way—not everyone is struggling; not everyone is at risk. Some of us have enough financial means to be insulated from immediate threats. So what happens when a national crisis is technically a "part of the nation" crisis? Are "we" still "we"?

The solution must be a partnership among all of us.

Almost everyone says they want to help poor people, and I think deep in their hearts, they do. It is part of our Christian heritage to "love our neighbors as we love ourselves." It is part of our national aspiration to be the "United States."

But in this recession we do not all face the same decisions. Those who are secure have to decide whether or not we will help those who are now out of work. This decision can't be based mainly on our economic pain or plenty; it must be based on our principles. If "we" are still "we," it is because we remember our faith and our common history and decide this is still the United States.

What to do? Platitudes are not enough. I hear people saying, "Prioritize jobs, jobs, jobs." That's wonderful, until we realize how complicated the solution is in a national and global economy. I am reminded of a story I heard attributed to humorist Will Rogers. When asked how he would solve the problem of submarine attacks on U.S. ships in World War I, he said, "Simple. Just boil the ocean, and when they come to the surface because the water's too hot, shoot 'em!" Asked how we could possibly boil the ocean, he replied, "Look—I've given you the solution; you work out the details."

Those of us in the faith communities are a part of the solution during this time of recession. Many of us are stretching to help newly poor families and individuals going through difficult times, but when I hear people say that the government shouldn't have to help people because that's the churches' job, I'm taken aback. Almost every church I know is living paycheck to paycheck (Sunday to Sunday). Churches can and will help, but churches can only make a small dent financially.

The solution must be a partnership among all of us. The best national offering we have is the one that assures we are all in this together. We must do what we can as individuals and faith communities, but the government, too, should address the basic needs of the most vulnerable, through public policies and through the use of taxes from those of us who are blessed by wealth and position.

The most complete Christian service includes a component of public funds and advocacy for the poor, because Christians are a part of the "we" and because Jesus' command to "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's" is a way to be devoted to "God [and] what is God's" (Matthew 22:21). ■

***Dr. Joel C. Hunter** is senior pastor of Northland Church in Orlando, Florida.*

GIVE A *Voice* TO THOSE WITHOUT ONE, CHANGE A *Life* THIS CHRISTMAS

LAUREN OXENDINE

"I want to broaden my horizons, share my culture and all that I've learned, and try to show people there can be a better life for everybody."
Lumbee Tribe member, Robeson County, N.C.

ANGELICA JUSTINIANO

"We want to be a part of changing the lives of others through sharing with them the Word of God and to do whatever is needed through our advocacy."
UMYF President, Philippines Annual Conference

APRIL COTTON

"I'm learning what it means for me to give a chance at life to those who don't have voices or who aren't heard."
Student, Philander Smith College

A voice cries out in the wilderness.

Who will hear it?

This Christmas give a voice to the voiceless by supporting United Methodist Special Sundays that advocate for peace with justice and those who are often marginalized or excluded.

Your gifts to Peace with Justice Sunday, Native American Ministries Sunday, and Human Relations Day support ministries that reach out to people who are often overlooked and give them a voice to be heard.

GIVE ONLINE TODAY

Human Relations Day: www.umcgiving.org/giveHRD
Native American Ministries Sunday: www.umcgiving.org/giveNAMS
Peace with Justice Sunday: www.umcgiving.org/givePWJS

FOR
SALE

BY JILL SHOOK

SEVEN WAYS HOME

Despite foreclosures and rising poverty, there are models—lots of them—to help put decent housing within reach.

IN 1996, I co-founded a tutoring and mentoring ministry for low-income students in partnership with a church in Pasadena, California. My visits to student homes helped me recognize the problem that the high cost of housing posed for children's long-term success. Without decent, affordable housing in good neighborhoods, multiple families were squeezed into tiny apartments concentrated in one part of town—a situation that could breed gangs, homelessness, crime, and soaring dropout rates. I began to ask myself what the church might be doing to find solutions to this complex issue.

Here are seven viable ways churches and other groups are responding to today's housing crisis.

Stephen Swintek/Getty Images

1. Financial literacy and foreclosure prevention. With thousands of homeowners losing their houses through foreclosure, one of the biggest priorities is figuring out how to keep folks in their homes. As Alan Mallach, author of *A Decent Home*, argued this summer in *Shelterforce* magazine, U.S. housing dollars should focus on helping families to *stay* in their homes by creating a robust support system to help homeowners with repairs, long-term home improvement planning, good mortgage products, ongoing counseling, and emergency assistance. Mallach also argued for providing more low-income rental units in high-demand cities such as Palo Alto, California, (but not in places like Las Vegas, where vacancy rates are high and rents are low).

One leader in helping homeowners avoid foreclosure is the Neighborhood Assistance Corporation of America (NACA). In 1994, under the leadership of former Federal Reserve Bank regulator Bruce Marks, the organization helped to expose Fleet Bank's predatory practices and negotiate a settlement (including a $140 million, NACA-administrated home loan program for low- and moderate-income people). I've had the joy of helping several of my low-income neighbors save their homes by bringing them to NACA events at the Los Angeles Convention Center.

U.S. housing dollars should focus on helping families to stay in their homes.

Several groups in California, many of them faith-based, are also doing this work, including the community development corporation of West Angeles Church of God in Christ; the LA-based Korean Churches for Community Development; and Northern California Urban Development. But NACA and groups like these only begin to touch the desperate need today; we need many more groups engaged in foreclosure prevention.

STRAW BALES AND GRANNY FLATS

More paths to affordable housing.

- **Accountability systems** such as California's Housing Element Law, which requires local government to plan for housing needs, including affordable housing.
- **"Granny flats"** or second dwelling units permitted to be built in backyards.
- **Affordable housing fast-track approvals** and fee waivers.
- **Inclusionary zoning**, whereby a percentage of housing is set aside as affordable; utilizing this, 400 units have been created in Pasadena.
- **Density bonuses**, which allow developers that include affordable housing to build more units on a plot of land than the area zoning would otherwise allow.
- **Approval for alternative home construction materials** such as superadobe, rammed earth, and straw bales. **—JS**

2. Mutual self-help. Most people are familiar with Habitat for Humanity's "sweat equity" model, where volunteers help build a home that is then sold to a low-income family with a no-interest loan. Less known is the "mutual self-help" model, where families in rural America first qualify for a mortgage, then partner with seven to 11 other families who will all build their homes together.

The model first gained prominence in the Central Valley of California in the 1960s through the work of the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC). The Quaker group had listened to the housing dreams of migrant farm workers, many of whom lived in squalid conditions—30 families might share one rusty faucet. In response, AFSC offered the mutual self-help model: Families would work together to build their homes, with no one moving in until all the homes were completed. This built community as well as housing. The success of this model inspired the formation of Self-Help Enterprises, based in Visalia, California, which has helped more than 5,000 families build homes. The model has been so successful that today some self-help housing is sponsored by the USDA's Rural Development program.

3. Adaptive reuse. Consider the abandoned buildings in your community. One example: The Atlanta Stockade in Georgia, a city jail until 1924, had sat empty for decades. In the 1980s, Christian community developer Bob Lupton of FCS Urban Ministries invited Atlanta's top architects (who would more typically be working in competition against each other) into the Stockade to view the original architectural plans he had discovered. As the architects entered, they could visualize how this "symbol of injustice could be transformed into a symbol of compassion," says Lupton. Within four years, 67 apartments were housing low-income workers, who spend only about a third of their income on their housing expenses.

In Chicago in the wake of the 1960s riots, Bethel Lutheran Church leveraged its church building, putting it up as collateral five times to buy apartment buildings. Its community development ministry, Bethel New Life, made the buildings into affordable housing, taking them off the speculative market. With this experience, in 1989 the ministry bought a 9.2-acre, 434-bed, seven-building dilapidated hospital that today houses, along with many other community services, 125 units of subsidized housing for seniors, plus assisted-living slots for 85 more seniors.

Adaptive reuse preserves both the natural and human resources that went into the initial use of a building and maintains the charm and character of communities.

4. Community land trust (CLT). This model is my favorite because of the way it reflects the spirit of Jubilee law (Leviticus 25:8-13). It originated partly in India. Vinoba Bhave, one of Gandhi's spiritual successors, started a campaign to quell violence after Gandhi's death by asking local landowners to donate land for the landless, which they, surprisingly, did. But families were unable to make good use of the land without the necessary tools, fertilizer, and seeds. Many ended up selling the land and moving to the city. To remedy this, the land was given

to the village as a whole, which acted as the land's trustee. Here the seed of the CLT concept was planted: Land would be placed in a trust and governed by board members from the broader community, along with those living on the trust.

Today in the U.S. about 250 CLTs exist. There are many variations within the CLT model. Land can be contiguous or scattered, and leased for a variety of uses—cooperatives, rentals, offices—but in most cases it's used for housing. Residents own the building, but lease the underlying land through a 99-year, renewable lease. Each CLT designs a resale formula to provide a fair return for the homeowner's investment yet keep the property affordable for future low-income households. CLTs create a permanent form of affordability, preserve housing subsidies, prevent absentee landlordism, and give low-income folks the pride of homeownership.

A model similar to CLTs is common among colleges and universities. One example is at California State University Channel Islands. The institution retains the ownership of the land, selling only the homes to faculty during their years of employment. This keeps employees close by, minimizes traffic, and brings revenue to the institution and equity to the homeowner.

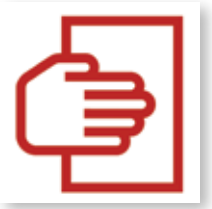
5. Using church-owned land. Often we don't see what we're holding in our hands—after all, 5,000 people were fed from five loaves and two fishes! Many churches have parking lots, property, and even airspace that can be used to create affordable housing. When Rev. DarEll Weist of First United Methodist Church of Los Angeles felt called to "build a village," he first thought his call was to build a congregation, but later realized he was to build affordable housing. His church had land but no money. Weist had no experience, so he contacted the architecture department at the University of Southern California, where he found professor John Mutlow, an expert in affordable housing. The church owned a third of the block. That gave them development rights for the whole block, especially since the other owners had no plans for it. With permission from the church, Weist founded 1010 Development Corporation, which master-planned the entire project. Today there is indeed a village, including 66 units of family housing and 75 senior-citizen housing units.

6. Tenants taking ownership. In 1995, a group of homeless families that were members of the Kensington Welfare Rights Union (KWRU), a grassroots group in Philadelphia, had moved into St. Edward's Cathedral, then vacant, to make a public statement. To show solidarity and prevent their eviction, Shane Claiborne and other students from Eastern University moved in with them. Eventually members of KWRU and the students helped to move a number of the homeless families into abandoned homes, at times being arrested for this activity.

> "We are challenging corporations' right to own thousands of vacant homes while people are left homeless."

Take Back the Land, a national movement founded by Miami-based "squatter's realtor" Max Rameau, has moved many families into abandoned properties, asserting that it improves neighborhoods by preventing homes being stripped and other illegal activity. Not worried about being arrested, Rameau said, "We are challenging corporations' right to own thousands of homes that they keep vacant while human beings are left homeless." He considers his home-squatters to be like the civil rights movement activists who defied Jim Crow by sitting in the front of the bus.

In the 1990s, Paul Smith, a Harvard grad, moved into a decayed, gang-infested apartment building in Los Angeles, to be a neighbor to the poor and to share the gospel. When tenants began to discuss the deteriorating conditions in their building, the idea of a resident takeover emerged. After a rent strike, the unresponsive landlord—convicted of criminal building neglect—abandoned the property. These poor, mostly immigrant residents became "slumlords" of a valuable property near downtown LA. With the help of community organizers and public-interest lawyers, the tenants formed a nonprofit corporation called Comunidad Cambria, which partnered with the city housing department and developers and to purchase and renovate the building. For a time I was the asset manager of this sparkling building, and I witnessed the pride of shared ownership, where many young people now choose college over gangs.



7. Community organizing. Because of my background as an evangelical, with little experience in these areas, I had difficulty grasping the concept of community organizing. I struggled to understand how community organizing works, and I even wondered if it was biblical. Then I got a taste of the work of two community organizing groups, South Bronx Churches and East Brooklyn Congregations. Together they created 4,000 units of housing thanks to the work of 60 member churches—an accomplishment that has been breaking the cycle of poverty, lowering crime, and infusing hope where there had been none.

My own ministry also began to take on a new flavor of systemic transformation. I began to see how Moses, Nehemiah, and Jesus were consumate organizers. I discovered countless examples of how listening to the dreams of lower-income community leaders, gathering up their stories to create a united story, and speaking truth to power were transforming the church and every level of society. For example, in Montgomery County, Maryland, a bedroom community of Washington, D.C., 20 churches organized and were able to help persuade the county council to set aside 2.5 percent of all property taxes for an affordable housing trust fund.

Let's imagine many more ways we might take seriously housing our nation—especially the most vulnerable. ■

***Jill Shook** is author of* Making Housing Happen: Faith-Based Affordable Housing Models.

BY JOAN CHITTISTER, OSB

MONASTERIES OF THE HEART

A vibrant spirituality for our troubled times grows out of a centuries-old tradition.

"ALL JOURNEYS HAVE secret destinations," Martin Buber wrote, "of which the traveler is unaware." The insight is a striking one. The fact is that ours is an entire culture on a journey. We are all on our way to somewhere without a clue of where we're going or how to get there.

Only one thing is clear: Everywhere we go, there's a rending sound in the air around us. Something, we're afraid, is being torn apart behind our backs, under our feet, in the very center of our national soul. Ask what it is and the pundits will tell you that it's the economy or the political climate or global entanglements and free trade. And, at one level at least, they're right. But they stop short, I think, of the real problem. They'll tell you that it's everything except what people fear it is, down deep inside themselves, but are afraid to whisper for fear they might just be right.

The Rule of Benedict brings new spiritual energy to daily life.

The truth is that something is, indeed, being sundered in our time. But it's not any particular national initiative that's at fault. It is far more serious than that. It is the very fabric of the society itself that is being torn apart: What we knew ourselves to be—the way we went about our lives, our businesses, our educations, our relationships—is fading. Even the dispositions we commonly brought to the solution of issues have changed. We can discuss the pros and cons of torture in the public arena now and never even have the grace to blush. We can plan to slice food stamps for the children of the poor and, in the same breath, refuse to tax the rich. We can simply refuse to negotiate politically and still call ourselves virtuous.

Robert Harding/World Imagery

At right, the cloister's keystone in Fontevraud Abbey, France.

Above, artist Fra Angelico's St. Benedict of Nursia.

Worse, maybe this concern for the social climate of our lives is not local. Perhaps it's universal. Perhaps the Japanese and the Europeans feel the same—their sense of national identity gone, their feeling of national control gone, their sense of historical confidence gone, their national consensus on national values gone.

What's worse, however serious the situation, it did not descend on us without warning. We knew it was coming. We simply ignored it. The old head-in-the-sand trick, it turns out, has been no more successful than usual.

Echoes of the warnings that preceded the present debacle are still vibrating. Like the prophets of another age, voices rose regularly to tell us that someday the military budget would swamp us. Or, the U.S. penchant for supremacy would come down like Gulliver in a storm of resistance from small societies that have become our low-paid labor force for our high-class goods. Or, that rampant financial negligence and mismanagement would paralyze the kind of economic growth to which we had become accustomed.

And they were right. An economy built on consumption, institutionalized greed, and a culture of debt is withering. Our gods of power and wealth have failed us.

But, despite the warnings, a system sedated by its addiction to excess rather than sufficiency and fracturing at the center of itself lumbered on undeterred. As a culture, we became Cyclops in a sea of things, unknowing or uncaring—or both.

More than that, churches have not been much better than the state in naming the problem and responding to the needs of the time. Fixated on single issues of sexuality or evolution or the nature of female discipleship, their concerns have become increasingly dogmatized and considerably less concentrated on the problems of the poor. Their focus slipped away from past concerns for spiritual development and social justice to new emphases on religious structures and internal problems. Churches themselves began to polarize and split and drift into ritual for its own sake—when ritual itself was not the problem.

CLEARLY, OUR REAL problems are not economic or political; our real problems are spiritual. They are of the soul. They came out of sated appetites and desiccated spirits.

What is the average person in search of a spiritual base, a platform for personal action in such a muddled world, supposed to do then? Where does someone in search of a spiritual life go when the anchors upon which, until this time, they have based their security and no small amount of their faith rust out and disappear in a reservoir of irrelevancies?

Some stop going to church entirely. Figures on church attendance record the steady decline in church affiliation over the years. In fact, new studies report a surprising shift. Now more than ever before, people with high school or college degrees attend church more often than people without the benefit of an education. Churches, once accused of being the refuge of the poor and uneducated, the heralds of social ill, were suddenly the

Each age addresses the spiritual dimensions of life in ways peculiar to itself.

home of the more conservative, more traditional churchgoing population, of people whose social theology was already formed in the theology of prosperity, a society that is no longer the advocate for and home to the poor of the country.

Others drift away from religion completely or move into practices that stress spiritual self-development or personal serenity over social concern.

Many, on the other hand, maintain their affiliation with churches of their tradition but go beyond them. Small intentional spiritual communities or book discussion groups or social action groups began to fill the spiritual crevasses left unplumbed by the church itself.

One way or another, churches either avoid the questions raised by contemporary society or concentrate only on the isolated ones that threatened theology as they knew it. Then, religion becomes a private devotion rather than a public obligation as well.

CLEARLY, IT IS a crossover moment in

time. Where can we go to find a model of what it means to live a spiritually serious, socially impacting life of the Spirit in a time such as this, when public policy is in tatters and spiritual traditions are turning in on themselves? And if there is such a model, how do we empower individuals who are seeking it to become part of it?

With those two questions in mind—the need for a social model as well as a way to empower individuals to meet their desire for a genuinely spiritual life—the Benedictine Sisters of Erie set out to create a new form of Benedictine monastic life for our time. Titled "Monasteries of the Heart," its impetus is based on the sixth century Rule of Benedict and the organizational principles and spiritual values upon which it structured a way of life. A spirituality that is tried and true, it has been the lifestyle of thousands of monastics for centuries.

Monasteries of the Heart provides both creativity and stability. It enables community groups to form through both an online website (monasteriesoftheheart.org) and by the formation of small on-site communities of like-minded followers.

It gives both structure and freedom by enabling groups to be self-initiating and immersed in the Rule, as groups online or on-site, or, also in the spirit of the tradition, alone, as hermits who go to the website for spiritual sustenance and personal growth. It forms the person in centuries-old spiritual depth and contemporary commitment by guiding them through discussions of the meaning of the Rule for them and the practice of prayer as well as through commitment to the needs of the human community.

It calls for both immersion in personal spiritual development and consciousness of the obligation of their communities for the upbuilding of the public domain through the support or participation in public ministries. It requires fidelity to a lifestyle, which, if a person desires, may be confirmed by private promises to the monastic life but gears the commitment to a spiritual life practiced in private homes in the public arena.

Monasteries of the Heart is a new movement that in four months has drawn more than 2,500 members and now has 24 registered online or on-site communities. It is a spirituality for the 21st century.

Monasteries of the Heart is a kind of guide for those seekers who stand in the midst of a seething, simmering world of options—spiritual as well as secular—overwhelmed by choices and looking for the rhythm of a better life. It is a model upon which to build their own lives, a template to take them through the maze of empty promises, seductive dead ends, and useless panaceas a spiritless world has to offer.

Our gods of power and wealth have failed us.

EACH AGE HAS answered the questions of the spiritual dimensions of life in ways peculiar to itself, in language and symbols and lifestyles it could understand. For some, the search to unite with the One, with the Energy, with the Life of life took the form of desert asceticism. For others, it lay in communal worship. For many, it has been in an attempt to withdraw from the business of this world in order to be better attuned to the next.

But for Benedict of Nursia, the spiritual life lay in simply living this life well. All of it. Every simple, single action of it. The proof of the power of such a life to turn the ordinary into an experience of extraordinary union with the God of the Universe here and now is a matter of history. Benedictine spirituality, the legacy of this sixth century founder of cenobitic monasticism to our own times, is proof of its enduring value.

Benedictine spirituality is more than 1,500 years old. It developed at a time when Europe lay in political, economic, communal, and spiritual disarray. Benedictine spirituality helped draw Europe out of the quagmire of decline left by the fall of the Roman Empire. It became a model for social stability during centuries of the increasing erosion of Western civilization as a result of the political vacuum that followed it.

But instead of setting out to reform the decadence around him, Benedict simply ignored the cheap and chaotic superficiality of it all to live according to different standards, to walk a different path, to live the same life everyone else lived, but differently. Through the ages, from one century to another, thousands of others, following this model, have done the same.

In our own time, in this time of cataclysmic social upheavals, of global transition, of technological breakthroughs of unimagined proportions, we must do the same. Old forms are breaking down; small groups everywhere are seeking to shape new ways of living for themselves in the shell of the old. The empowerment of individuals during a time of social breakdown comes from the capacity of groups to enable individuals to function beyond their own strength. In order to achieve the vision our hearts seek, we join groups in order to do together what we cannot possibly do alone.

Monasteries of the Heart brings the Rule of Benedict, the person, and the community together to do again in our own time what is needed to revive our spiritual energy, our recognition of common values, and a sense of vibrant and effective human community.

Based on the pillars on which the ancient Rule itself stands—prayer, work, community, humility, hospitality, and peace—Monasteries of the Heart brings spiritual depth to the ordinary, brings daily life alive with new spiritual energy, brings community support to personal growth. It teaches the seeker to listen for the voice of God wherever it may be heard, to be open to changes that stretch the soul to where the Spirit waits for it now, to remain in the monastery "all the days of their lives" so that finally, using the Rule of Benedict, they may grow into full spiritual stature.

Indeed, "all journeys have secret destinations," as Buber said, "of which the traveler is unaware." May the individuals, the families, and the small intentional communities who seek by using the Rule of Benedict to create within themselves a Monastery of the Heart find there the God who all along our journey through life is forever seeking us. ■

***Joan Chittister**, OSB, a* Sojourners *contributing editor, is executive director of Benetvision and the author of many books, including* The Monastery of the Heart *(Bluebridge, 2011). For more, visit monasteriesoftheheart.org.*

BY WES HOWARD-BROOK
Illustration by Jon Krause

WHICH SIDE ARE YOU ON?

A study on the Bible's "two religions."

FOR A THOUSAND years before Jesus, two radically different worldviews and social orders battled for the hearts and minds of God's people. I'm not referring to what we might think of as "Judaism" and "paganism." Rather, I'm talking about two diametrically opposed ways of being the people of the same God.

These two ways fought during the monarchy: kings and their elite companions on one side, the prophets and the oppressed poor and excluded on the other. They fought during the Second Temple period after the Babylonian Exile: the urban elite associating God with the wisdom of empires; the voices of the emerging apocalyptic tradition crying out for an egalitarian social and economic order in that same God's name.

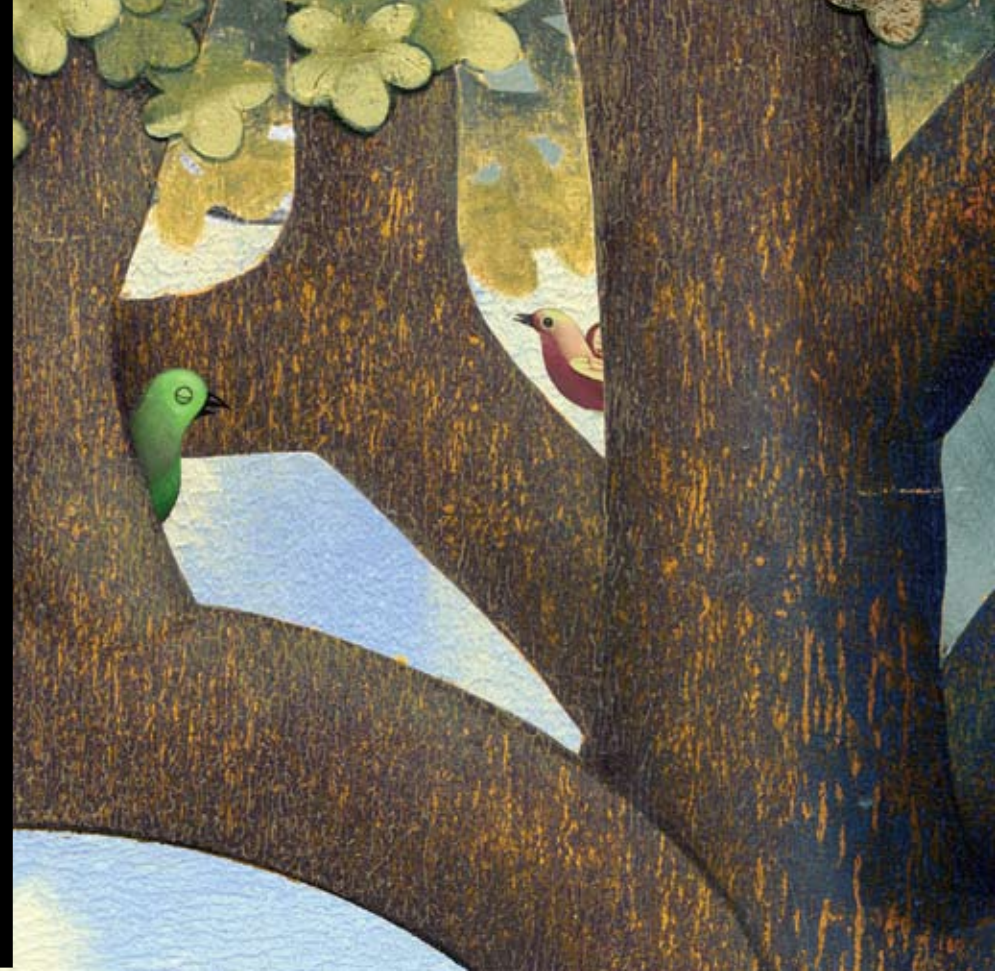
We can see the battle taking place throughout the New Testament.

Jesus was born into this ancient and ongoing struggle. He experienced the heavens ripped open and God's spirit poured down on him, bathing him in divine love. He now knew clearly which side God was on. He went forth from his baptism proclaiming one of these traditions to be the true "word" and "way" of God, and the other a diabolic counterfeit. I call these the "religion of creation" and the "religion of empire." Jesus embodied and called others to join him in living the good news of the fulfillment of the religion of creation.

WE CAN SEE this battle taking place throughout the New Testament, reaching its spectacular culmination in John of Patmos' portraits of the fallen and disgraced "whore," Babylon, and the beautiful "bride of the Lamb," New Jerusalem. But even passages that might seem domesticated reveal Jesus announcing the victory of the true "religion" that will unite God's people together in bonds of love, compassion, and deep joy.

I use the word "religion" cautiously, knowing how it is fraught with the history of "holy wars" and ongoing "us vs. them" fights for supremacy. The Latin root *religio* means simply "bind again." Rather than thinking of "religion" in terms of the usual labels (for example, Judaism, Christianity, or Islam), I suggest we use the term to refer to a worldview and associated pattern of practices that claim divine authority. The "religion" of the kingdoms Jesus stands *against* is marked by, among other things, violence, economic exploitation, and social exclusion. The religion of the kingdom Jesus *proclaims* is experienced in mutual love, economic sharing, and social inclusion.

A few familiar images from Luke's gospel illustrate this contrast when examined through the lens of the "two religions." The first image



Those "oppressed by the devil" are people driven into separate camps by the way of the world's kingdoms.

is that of the devil. Jesus confronts this adversary immediately after his baptism in the Jordan, after the Spirit leads him into the wilderness. The "devil" (*diabolos* in Greek) makes only rare, cameo appearances in the scriptures before the gospels (other than as God's betting opponent in Job). One use is when Antiochus IV Epiphanes—evil king of the Seleucid Empire, opposed in war by the Maccabees—is referred to as *diabolon ponēron*, "an evil adversary" (1 Maccabees 1:36). This use matches the devil's claim to political authority in opposition to God, as he confronts Jesus in the wilderness and leads him up to see "all the kingdoms of the world": "To you I will give all this authority and their glory; for it has been delivered to me, and I give it to whom I will" (Luke 4:6). In both instances, the *diabolos* is one who seeks to wield the power of empire over God's people.

The devil's next appearance in Luke is in Jesus' parable of a sower and seeds (8:5-15). There the devil is equated with the one who takes away the Word/seed that fell on the path.

The devil appears again in Luke's writings in a speech by Peter to the household of Cornelius, the Roman centurion. In that moment, Peter comes to understand that—contrary to what he had learned from the adherents of the religion of empire—God does not favor one people over another, but rather, "shows no partiality ... in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him" (Acts 10:34-35). Peter continues by summarizing the word of "peace" preached by Jesus Christ, who healed "all who were oppressed by the devil" (10:36, 38). The juxtaposition is clear: Those "oppressed by the devil" are people driven into separate camps by the way of the world's kingdoms, "insiders vs. outsiders" who are split by class, wealth, and ethnicity. Over against this diabolic power is the power of God, healing all oppression and division, restoring all to one divinely beloved family.

Let's listen more deeply to Luke's sower-and-seeds parable. We hear that the seed that fell on the path was "trampled on" and the "birds of the air" devoured it (Luke 8:5). The Greek verb for "trampled" is the one Greek translators used for the prophet Amos' description of the elite who "crush" the needy and "oppress" (*katadunasteuousai*) the poor (Amos 4:1; see also Hosea 5:11). The Greek verb for "oppress" refers several times to such injustice, for instance in Exodus 1:13: "The Egyptians became ruthless (*katedunasteuon*) in imposing tasks on the Israelites ..." That verb is used only twice in the New Testament. Once is in James 2:6: "But you have dishonored the poor. Is it not the rich who oppress (*katadunasteuousin*) you?" The second is the devil's oppression noted above (Acts 10:38).

In the parable, we are not told who "tramples" on the seed, but we do hear that the "birds of the air" "devour" it. "Devouring" is always negative in Luke. For example, the elder brother resents his younger, prodigal brother's "devouring" their father's property (Luke 15:30). More pointedly, Jesus uses it to describe what the Jerusalem scribes do to the houses of widows under the pretense of worshiping God (Luke 20:47). But who are the "birds of the air" who devour the trampled seed of God's Word?

"Birds of the air" next appear in Jesus' response to someone who offers to follow him "wherever you go" (Luke 9:57). Jesus says: "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head." Finally, we see them in another parable: The kingdom of God "is like a mustard seed that someone took and sowed in the garden; it grew and became a tree, and the birds of the air made nests in

its branches" (Luke 13:19). We might wonder: If "birds of the air" in the sower parable "devoured" God's Word/seed in apparent league with the devil, then how did they find a home in the tree that grows from the seed of God's kingdom?

TO UNRAVEL THIS mystery, let's listen to how two prophets used this imagery centuries earlier. Ezekiel paints a picture of the Assyrian Empire as a great cedar of Lebanon, "of great height, its top among the clouds" in which "all the birds of the air made their nests in its branches" (Ezekiel 31:3, 6). But then God proclaims that this beautiful and towering tree has been "cut down" and "its branches have fallen" and "on its fallen trunk settle all the birds of the air" (31:12-13). Why the collapse of the great tree? Because "its heart was proud of its height" (verse 10). Ezekiel 31 makes clear that the "birds of the air" are the nations that found temporary shelter within the protection of Assyria; but when Assyria is defeated, those nations settle amid the imperial ruins.

Daniel repeats the image of the great imperial tree being cut down. He interprets King Nebuchadnezzar's dream of a "tree at the center of the earth," whose "top reached to heaven" and "the birds of the air nested in its branches" (Daniel 4:10-12). This time, the tree's fall leads the birds to flee from its broken branches. Daniel makes plain that the tree is "you, O king!" (verse 22). The king himself will be "driven away from human society" and be restored to power only when he "learn[s] that heaven is sovereign" (verse 25).

Thus, by the time we hear the image spoken by Jesus in Luke's gospel, we should recognize that "birds of the air" symbolize the nations. It therefore should be no surprise to hear that they devour the seed that is God's Word, since their power is from the devil, the one who reigns over the world's kingdoms. Similarly, we can understand why the "birds of the air" have nests, and the foxes their holes (compare with Luke 13:32, where Jesus calls King Herod "a fox"), while the Son of Man is homeless. It is precisely from Daniel (7:12-13) that the image of "Son of Man" ("Human One") echoes: The One "like a human being" whose sovereignty is unlike that of the "devouring beasts" (Daniel 7:5, using the same verb for "devour" as in Luke 8:5 and 20:47), but truly in the image of God. The Son of Man, unlike the "birds of the air" and the foxes, finds no "home" in the world's kingdoms.

Given this context, we can hear how subversive Jesus' final "birds of the air" image is in Luke 13:19. Rather than finding a home in the diabolic kingdom-tree, the birds make their nests in the tree of God's own kingdom. This alternative kingdom emerges from a mustard seed sown in "the garden." Gardens in the ancient world were manifestations of empire, as, for example, the famous Hanging Gardens of Babylon. They symbolized the king's dominion over creation, reshaped within the royal city to provide shade and respite for those within empire's sheltering branches. But, Jesus claims, "someone" has subverted this garden by planting a nearly invisible seed, which suddenly becomes a tree abundant enough to house all the nations.

Thus, these homey images of seeds, trees, and birds convey a subversive contrast between two radically different kingdoms. The devil's kingdoms exert power from above, whereas the power of God's kingdom grows from "good soil." The worldly kingdoms seek to expand through violence. God's kingdom, however, contains no violence. Rather, it bears fruit through the practice of "faithful resistance" (*hupomenē*; Luke 8:15). Both kingdoms claim divine authority to bring all people within their shelter. Each does so, however, through a different "religion" that would unite people. Jesus insists that one is authentically grounded in the experience of the Creator God, and one is a diabolic lie. ■

Before the gospels, the "devil" makes only cameo appearances in the scriptures.

Wes Howard-Brook *teaches at Seattle University. He is the author of* Unveiling Empire, Becoming Children of God, *and* "Come Out, My People!"

A MASON OF PEACE

An Arab Christian works—person by person and block by block—to bring Muslims and Christians together in Jordan.

FATHER NABIL HADDAD is founder and executive director of the Jordanian Interfaith Coexistence Research Center (JICRC) in Amman, Jordan. JICRC is an interfaith organization that promotes peace-building based on shared religious values and human rights principles through public events, educational initiatives, and participation in interreligious dialogues, nationally and internationally. Haddad is a priest in the Melkite Catholic Church in Jordan. He was interviewed by phone in June by former *Sojourners* assistant editor Jeannie Choi.

"Our message of love will not accept any limits."

Sojourners: Tell us about the history of Christianity in Jordan.

Nabil Haddad: I belong to the Arab Christian community in Jordan, which dates back 2,000 years. Actually, you'll find evidence of this conversion in Acts 2, when the Arabs were present during the day of Pentecost. Arabs were there!

These Arabs continued to exist in this part of this world and carry a Christian witness between the time of the Roman Empire and the Byzantines. In the seventh century we were the ones who had to coexist with the newly established Arab Islamic state, and this continued until nowadays, when unfortunately the Arab Christian community is emigrating from this part of the world.

Why are Christians emigrating from the Middle East? First of all, for economic reasons and seeking a better life for their children. The other reason is the lack of tranquility, the lack of civility, and the invasion of tourism culture. Also, due to the war we have seen in this part of the world—in Iraq—Arab Christians are finding that their existence here is at risk.

Does violence against Christians in the Middle East have anything to do with this? The reasons behind this emigration can be seen in the burning of churches, in the killing of clergy and worshipers attending Sunday services in an Iraqi church. Of course, this has placed a heavy weight on the mood of Christians, and the mood of the region. This is the fear factor, and everybody is concerned, but it is up to Christians and Muslims alike to work together, to join hands and to build an alliance.

Christians are an integral part of the Jordanian Arab community. I can't see any Middle Eastern Arab community without a Christian element. I think it is a responsibility of Muslims and Christians alike to get together in order to make this a challenge for the inhabitants and citizens of the Middle East. We can't talk about the Middle East without a Christian witness.

U.S. Mission Geneva photo

D. HADDAD

Father Haddad at a recent conference in Jordan.

Heather Wilson

How have you been able to build allegiances between Christians and Muslims? The Jordanian Interfaith Coexistence Research Center is the first nongovernmental organization in Jordan based on interfaith values. It is not a religious institution, but it was built on the common values systems that we have in the monotheistic religions. We all talk about love, respect for the human being, good relations among people, and obedience to the one God, the creator of all humankind.

We do not discuss our theological differences. We discuss the teachings of our religions that we have in common. I sometimes have to remind a Muslim to be a good person, as much as I remind myself to be a good Christian. In my daily encounters with my Muslim brothers and sisters, I tell them that my Lord Jesus Christ directed me to love my neighbor, and the neighbor in my case is this Muslim brother and sister, and I am not going to give up loving them because they are not Christians. Believe me, it is working.

How do you encourage coexistence between Muslims and Christians in Jordan and in the Middle East? I remind the Muslims that they have to protect the presence of the Christian community. If they don't show their respect and love to their Christian brothers and sisters, how can they talk about the verses in the Quran that call Muslims to love all people, not only the Muslims? How can a Muslim be a good person if he or she does not show this love and respect to the people of the book, to the Christians and the Jews?

I tell my Christian people that we are the salt in our society. Any salt in a dish is a small minority. I do this work out of my conviction that as a Christian I am the salt. And I have to be the good salt.

This is the challenge that we have as we talk among ourselves as a minority in Jordan, as Christians who are responsible for carrying a Christian witness. This approach has won respect in the local, regional, and can work at the international level.

I try my best to be a good Christian. I'm not talking about being Catholic or Orthodox or Protestant. I'm trying to be a good Christian. People don't care who you are, what denomination you are—but I carry the name of Christ in my daily attitude with them.

When it comes to our programs, we don't do things in a very complicated way. We simplify the message, we simplify the theory, we simplify the practice, and we simplify the application of all our programs. We need to go down to the level of people. And when we go down to their level, the people elevate us. I believe when we love these people, we get all those who are down on the earth, we get them up high to heaven through the message of love.

Have you ever seen a Santa in a mosque? I have taken Santa to a Muslim mosque. I have given Christmas gifts with Santa to Muslim and Christian children. People would ask, "Why are we celebrating Christmas—Christmas is a Christian ceremony?" I told the Muslims and Christians that I have to share the love of the child, Jesus Christ, with all people. It is a Christian message, but it's a Christian message for all. I remind those Muslims that the Holy Quran reveres the Virgin Mary and the Lord Jesus Christ. You can have your share of this great day. Our message of love will not accept any limits. We are *supposed* to be with Muslims. This is the message that I give and will never stop giving regardless of where I am and with whom I live.

What motivates you to do this work? I do this because I am a very selfish person. And this is a very holy selfishness: To love God, to love my neighbor like I love myself. I love myself in the proper way. The proper way is to show love. I want my people, my family, my kids, my parish, my friends, my Christians, my community—I want every one of them to enjoy security and peace. I am a mason of peace. I build peace, block by block. Not by myself, but with the help that I get from the people who are my allies, my friends, my partners who believe the same thing, and with the gift from God who gives me this strength to continue.

It is not easy to work for peace. It is much easier to sit back and feel isolated. I am doing this work for very selfish reasons, because I want people to say, "This man is a peacemaker." I don't want people to talk about me as a priest. I am a priest, but I am not a priest only for the Christians, I am a priest for all. I want people to see my Christ in what I say and in what I do. All these programs are done on this basis: Blessed are the peacemakers. ■

I want people to see my Christ in what I say and in what I do.

An Iraqi refugee prays at her new home in Amman, Jordan.

Ali Jarekji/Reuters

An Embattled Minority

Christians are under fire throughout the Middle East.

IN JORDAN, CHRISTIANS—who make up about 6 percent of the country—have broad rights and freedom and traditionally have received protection from the royal family. But this is the exception rather than the rule in the Middle East, where war and sectarian violence, government neglect or restrictions, and economic hardship have eroded the Christian presence in the region.

Christian refugees from Iraq and surrounding countries have increased in recent years, although exact numbers are not known because refugees are not counted by religious affiliation. The United Nations estimates that there are about 1.4 million total refugees from Iraq in Syria, Lebanon, and Jordan, and best estimates are that between 400,000 to 700,000 are Christian. (Few fled to Iran, where almost all Christian activity is illegal.)

Christians comprise about 2 percent of the West Bank population and less than 1 percent of Gaza. About 10 percent of the Arabs living in Israel are Christian, out of the total Arab population of about 1.2 million. Many Palestinian Christians have moved out of Israel/Palestine due to the 1948 war, the 1967 war, and other reasons. The government of Israel does not allow Arab refugees, Christian or Muslim, to return to the Occupied Territories.

In Egypt, Christians and Muslims engaged in some inspiring mutual cooperation and protection during the early 2011 demonstrations in Cairo and the revolution it sparked. But in the months since, reports of intimidation and attacks on Christians by Muslims and by government security forces have escalated. Coptic Christians make up about 10 percent of Egypt's 80 million people, but some reports say as many as 100,000 Copts have left Egypt in recent months. **—Leonard Rodgers**

***Leonard Rodgers** is director of Evangelicals for Middle East Understanding.*

JUST
MARRIED

BY HELEN LAKELLY HUNT

FROM PATRIARCHY TO PARTNERSHIP

Historically, traditional marriage was based on a subordinate view of women. An egalitarian model of mutual respect promises healthier relationships and a more just society.

I FEEL BLESSED to have grown up in the South, raised in the Southern Baptist tradition. When marriage was discussed at my church, I was taught there was a "holy chain of command." Authority flowed from God to husband, husband to wife, and wife to kids. In the best of cases, that "authority" came with loving care, protection, and guidance. But it was authority nonetheless.

My own family mirrored this paradigm. My dad was king of the house, allowing us to watch only one show on TV: *Father Knows Best*. My mom, who called Dad "Popsie," was expected to conform to Dad's rules. (Not once did I hear her call him by his first name.) Far from being unusual, my mother emerged from generations of women who "obeyed their husbands." This male dominator/female subordinator model of traditional heterosexual marriage often resulted in women losing their voice in both family and society.

In the '70s, Gloria Steinem pronounced that marriage was a dangerous place for women. This made sense to many at the time. How could women celebrate their equality linked arm-in-arm with husbands who "knew best"? As a result, many women left home to develop their sense of agency in the world. And many left their marriages altogether.

Stockbyte

But in the last several decades, a different concept of marriage emerged—an equality-based partnership model. Within this new paradigm, women (and men) have the opportunity to flourish. In fact, once two people learn to live in conscious partnership, the process can help women called to marriage develop their most resonant voice and deepest wisdom. As a result, a group of us are calling for the women's movement to add the support of healthy marriages to its socio-political agenda.

Women's second-class status is rooted in a long history. In 17th century Europe, academics and the elite met in salons to reflect on an "intriguing" question of the day: "Are women human?" Women were "given away" at weddings—their dowries used as bargaining chips to secure the most prestigious match for their families. Our Western laws are built upon Sir William Blackstone's volumes, within which he states: "By marriage, the husband and wife are one person in law: that is, the very being or legal existence of the woman is suspended during the marriage, or at least is incorporated and consolidated into that of the husband; under whose wing, protection, and cover, she performs everything." Laws like this fortified male superiority and fostered a poignant inequality that compromised not only women, but our society.

Given the checkered history of marriage, it makes sense that some women gave up on the institution.

Given the checkered history of marriage, it makes sense that some women gave up on the institution. For me, hoping against hope, I stubbornly believed that marriage could, in fact, be a holy union—offering the deepest fulfillment found in life. Because of this, a young Baptist minister from South Georgia caught my eye.

The Baptist minister's name was Harville Hendrix, a man obsessed with the conundrum of couplehood. The more he shared his passion for transforming the conflicts couples fall into, the more starry-eyed I became. I proposed, he accepted, and we worked hard to create a good marriage (which wasn't easy!). Our own relationship was a crucible for the theory and practice that became "Imago Relationship Therapy." Harville's book *Getting the Love You Want: A Guide for Couples,* which has been printed in 50 languages, focuses on a model of marriage based on mutual respect, one we now call a "Partnership Marriage."

Our approach to marriage has three main messages:

1 There is a myth in our culture: If you're having problems in your relationship, it means you're married to the wrong person. We believe this myth must be challenged. We teach that "conflict is growth trying to happen." Proverbs 27:17—"As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another"—suggests that conflict, when dealt with in a healthy manner, leads to new growth.

2 Whereas the purpose of marriage in the past was to secure economic and social stability, Partnership Marriage is about mutual healing. When two people work to truly meet each other's needs, they both achieve greater wholeness.

3 There is a new way to talk, which we call "Dialogue," that replaces parallel monologue in a relationship. When couples Dialogue they embody the spirit of the verse: "Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ" (Ephesians 5:21). It is important, however, that both partners take their turn submitting to the other.

We believe that incorporating these three ideas shifts marriage from the dominator/subordinator model into the partnership model, which fosters true mutual respect.

VARIOUS STUDIES SUGGEST that women in marriages thrive more than divorced women or unwed mothers. Researcher Patty Howell of the California Healthy Marriages Coalition has published data on marriage, education, marital outcomes, and key social and economic factors affecting women and girls. Her compilation of findings on the issues of abuse, economics, and women's health includes:

- Spousal and domestic partner abuse is two times higher among unmarried mothers.
- British data show that when a woman lives with a boyfriend who is not the father of her child/ren, the spousal and child abuse rate is 33 times higher than within an intact marriage with children.
- 75 percent of all women who apply for welfare benefits do so because of a disrupted marriage or relationship.
- Approximately 80 percent of long-term child poverty in the United States occurs among children from broken marriages or single-parent families.
- After divorce, the standard of living for women and children drops by 20 percent and women's home ownership drops by 12 percent.
- Cardiovascular risk for women over 50 is 60 percent higher among divorced women and 30 percent higher among widowed women than among married woman.

In fact, only two of Howell's findings showed unhealthy effects for married women. First, married women who reported "keeping their mouths shut" during conflict had four times the risk of dying from heart disease. And married women with unequal decision-making power have a higher risk of death. These two dynamics don't exist in a Partnership Marriage.

Furthermore, Howell's research suggests that it's not simply whether a woman is married. The quality of the marriage determines if a woman thrives. Her findings are supported by what Harville and I witness in our Imago workshops. Building a conscious couplehood demands that both people speak honestly, co-creating solutions that honor both partners. This is ultimately the truest form of empowerment.

More and more people are realizing the impact women have on their context. U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon wrote, "Equality for women and girls is ... a social and economic imperative. Where women are educated and empowered, economies are more productive and strong. Where women are fully represented, societies are more peaceful and stable." A report from the World Bank focusing on the economic and social implications of gender proclaimed, "Gender equality ... strengthens countries' ability to grow, to reduce poverty, and to govern effectively."

If we took this data seriously, we could toss out most parenting books and the troublesome economic equations and get ready to reduce the size of the military! We could say that it is equal partnerships created by empowered women and men that hold an important key to a healthier culture. Healthy marriages are the ultimate upstream solution that prevents so much downriver cleanup. Harville and I believe it is one of the best ways to transform the world—one couple at a time.

I AM CONVINCED that healthy marriages equal healthy women and girls, which equal a healthy society for all. Many now understand the role women play in building a healthy society. It's time to recognize healthy marriage's role in strengthening women and girls.

The women's movement generated revolution. Women know well that the world's greatest power is love. Love is the ultimate revolution. This was Jesus' message on earth. A Partnership Marriage, in which two people commit to heal one another, creates "a sacred space," a "space between" in which God comes to reside. As it says in Ecclesiastes, "Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken." And there are truly three strands within a Partnership Marriage, as the two within the marriage welcome the loving presence of God. ■

Helen LaKelly Hunt *is author of* Faith and Feminism: A Holy Alliance *and founder of The Sister Fund. With her husband, Harville Hendrix, she is cofounder of the Institute for Imago Relationship Therapy and coauthor of* Receiving Love: Transform Your Relationship by Letting Yourself Be Loved.

CHANGE *Lives*

THIS CHRISTMAS, INVEST IN *the Future*

JULIE FLEURINOR

Julie Fleurinor visits with a parishioner at College Bird Methodist Church, Port-au-Prince, Haiti. A recipient of a World Communion Sunday scholarship, Fleurinor studies at Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary, Evanston, Ill.

CHELSEA OVERSTREET

Chelsea Overstreet teaches English-as-a-second-language at the Sherab Ling Tibetan Buddhist Monastery in Bir, Himachal Pradesh, India. Overstreet, who received a United Methodist Student Day scholarship, attends Millsaps College, Jackson, Miss.

This Christmas, give students the opportunity to change the world. Your gifts to World Communion Sunday and United Methodist Student Day provide a gift that will last a lifetime — education. Hundreds of United Methodist students depend on your a gift to support their college education; yet, because of dwindling funds, hundreds more are turned down each year.

Gifts to World Communion Sunday and United Methodist Student Day provide scholarships and loans to students who might otherwise be unable to achieve their goals.

GIVE ONLINE TODAY

World Communion Sunday: www.umcgiving.org/givewcs
United Methodist Student Day: www.umcgiving.org/giveumsd

BY BARBARA CROOKER

Getty Images

Nativity

The amaryllis bulb, dumb as dirt,
inert, how can anything spring
from this clod, this stone,
the pit of some subtropical,
atypical, likely inedible fruit?
But it does: out of the dark
earth, two shoots, green
flames in December,
despite the short days,
the Long Night Moon
flooding the hard ground.
Nothing outside grows;
even small rodents
are burrowed in
the silent nights.

Then, one morning—
a single stalk,
then a bud
that swells, bells
full sail, full-bellied,
the skin grows thin,
tighter, until it splits:
heralds the night
will not be endless,
that dawn will blossom,
pearly and radiant,
and two white
trumpets unfold, sing
their sweet song,
their Hallelujah chorus,
sing carols in the thin cold air,
and our mouths say O and O and O.

Barbara Crooker'*s (www.barbaracrooker.com) most recent poetry collection is* More. *She lives in Fogelsville, Pennsylvania.*

Christmas Gift Guide

Purchase with a purpose

Act Justly
Love Mercy
Inspire
Feed
Refocus
Function as the hands and feet of Jesus in the world
Invest
Simplify Christmas
Work
Provide
Build
Walk Humbly With God
Demonstrate

Christmas is Not Your Birthday is a practical tool that inspires Jesus followers and churches to reclaim the broader missional meaning of Jesus' birth and move away from the self-focused and hedonistic gluttony that have become the hallmarks of the Advent season.

Published by Abingdon Press

Available at your preferred local or online bookseller.
www.abingdonpress.com | www.mikeslaughter.com

Purchase with a purpose

A gift card funds a small loan for a woman—giving her a powerful financial tool to build her business, feed her family, send her children to school and save for the future.

This Christmas, send Opportunity gift cards to everyone on your list. You'll be giving your family and friends the joy of helping a woman like Judith change her life.

to give a gift card,
visit **opportunity.org/giftcard**

Recipients choose a client online to help fund and then track her progress through email updates. Gift cards start at $10.

Opportunity International

Purchase with a purpose

the gift of opportunity

With a safe place to save, financial training and a business loan from Opportunity International, Judith Godiah's life began to change.

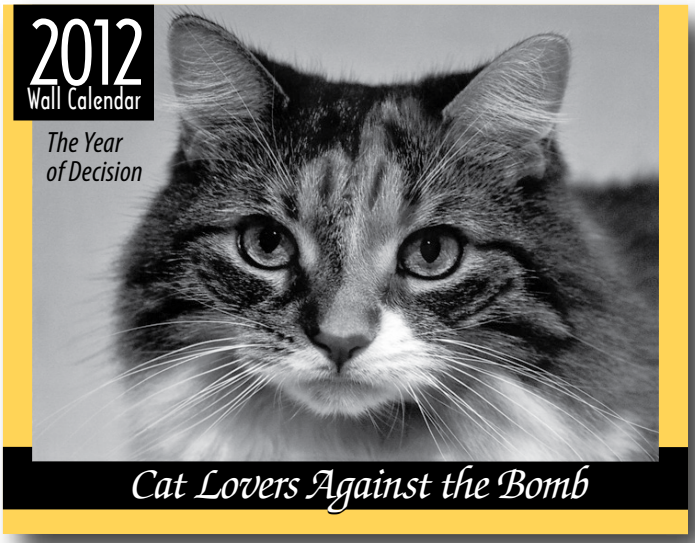
A few years ago, her business was struggling, meals were meager and school fees were hard to come by. Then Judith worked with Opportunity to open an electronics store in Bungoma, Kenya.

Through courage and hard work, she now saves profits from a growing business. And every day, she walks her well-fed children to school.

Give an Opportunity International gift card to your family and friends, and they can fund a business loan for a woman like Judith.

Purchase with a purpose

2012 Peace Activists & Cat Lovers *Wall Calendar*



cat photos, inspirational quotes, important dates

$8.95+$2.00 shipping USA/CANADA
Telephone: 877.778.3434
VISA /MC /DISC/No Paypal

CLAB-SJ
P.O. Box 83466
Lincoln, NE 68501-3466 USA

Indonesia, Paul Jeffrey/ACT Alliance

www.cwsbestgifts.org

800.297.1516

CHURCH WORLD SERVICE

KVI KINGDOM VENTURES, INC.
Products with Purpose

FAIR TRADE FEDERATION member

www.kingdom-ventures.com 585.739.5088 info@kingdom-ventures.com

Creating jobs for survivors of trafficking takes teamwork...

Made in Cambodia by survivors of Human Trafficking

US Distributor

Join the team!

STOPstart
STOP the trafficking...START a new life

Koinonia Farm

Enjoy the fruits of the Community's labor:

- Pecans – natural & delicious!
- Cotton Patch Gospels and other writings.
- Our continued commitment to the land and *all* people for future generations.
- A faithful community called to be a demonstration plot for God's kingdom. *Come & see.*

10% off your order with code: sojo

Your purchases and donations enable us to continue Clarence's prophetic vision and voice. Thank you!

www.koinoniapartners.org • 877-738-1741

Your investment can **change lives**

Client of Soro Yiriwaso, Mali. Photo courtesy of Oikocredit

A Gift that Keeps on Giving

This holiday season, Oikocredit offers you the opportunity to invest for the benefit of your family's youngsters. Through the **Oikocredit Growth Plan**, you can open an investment in your child or grandchild's name. As an Oikocredit investor, you and your child help reduce poverty for millions of people worldwide. Your impact is doubled: your funds will support these world-changing projects, and at the same time contribute to your child or grandchild's financial future.

How does it work?

An investment in Oikocredit is intended to maximize social benefits and pay a consistent financial return. A 2% dividend has been paid to Oikocredit investors almost every year for 35 years.

Through the **Oikocredit Growth Plan**, your child or grandchild receives a steady annual return of 2%; at the same time, communities build sustainable economic growth. As your child grows each year, Oikocredit continues to lend your money to our project partners who in turn make income-generating loans to poor. **The longer your funds remain invested, the greater your impact.**

That's a return you can count on.

At Oikocredit, we believe the world's poor can build better lives for themselves—if only given the chance. Our over 35 years of experience have shown us that **poor people don't lack ability, they lack opportunity**.

Oikocredit provides that opportunity. We invest in 875 local organizations in 71 countries that provide financial services to the world's most vulnerable communities. Your investment in Oikocredit allows us to reach **over 29 million people worldwide**.

To invest in the Oikocredit Growth Plan for your child or grandchild this holiday season, contact Oikocredit USA at usa@oikocredit.org or 202-728-4143.

www.oikocreditusa.org

OIKO CREDIT
investing in people

Purchase with a purpose

. . . And You Visited Me

Advocacy breakthrough buoys detention ministry.

Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service's commitment to advocating for people in immigration detention led to an important breakthrough in 2011. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) heard the cry of LIRS and other NGOs on the vital importance of visits for detainees and announced a new policy on facility tours and visitation.

The new policy, effective October 2011, allows more consistent access to facilities across the country, reducing the frustration of navigating facility-specific procedures. Most important, it allows for visitation requests without identifying specific detainees. Previous policy limited visitor access to people they already knew, and often involved challenging red tape. Now detainees can also request visits via sign-up forms posted inside detention facilities. The new policy will allow significantly more detained individuals to receive the support and encouragement visits can provide.

The months, sometimes years, vulnerable migrants spend in immigration detention can be extremely lonely and full of fear. As they await an asylum ruling or other resolution, visits from compassionate volunteers can bring powerful healing and hope. Visitors can also bring practical help that leads to more positive outcomes: Assistance with follow-through on action steps can be crucial to meeting deadlines related to immigration cases, and links to community assistance and hospitality can facilitate release so migrants can pursue their cases outside of detention.

"Spending one Saturday a month listening to detainees' stories is a quiet act of heroism," says LIRS Director for Access to Justice Leslie Vélez. "And it often leads to bold advocacy." And that bold advocacy, applied to our nation's problematic immigration policies, is vital to ending mandatory detention.

Be bold with LIRS. Stay up to date on issues and action opportunities at LIRS.org/dignity.

~Great Goods For the Conscientious Consumer~

Fair · Eco-Friendly · Handmade · Responsible · Equitable · Unique · Just · Sustainable

Tenfold fair trade collection

181 Potomac Street Harpers Ferry, WV
304-579-8525 www.tenfoldfairtrade.com

~Every Good Deed is Returned, Tenfold~

Lost and injured during a snow storm, Diana is saved by a mysterious Native American woman, who turns her life upside down in order to turn it right side up.

www.Crossquarter.com/ManyVoices

Skip the Stuff, Give Hope this Christmas

with a goat or other gifts from CRWRC's gift catalog

CRWRC

www.crwrc.org/gifts
800-55-CRWRC (US),
800-730-3490 (Canada)

The Christian Reformed World Relief Committee helps men and women around the world overcome poverty and hunger, and recover from natural and man made disasters. Go to www.crwrc.org for more information.

BY ROSE MARIE BERGER

What's Wrong with Capital Punishment

THE STATE OF Georgia executed Troy Davis at 10:53 p.m. on a Wednesday in September, by lethal injection. It took him 16 minutes to die. By the next morning there was fresh graffiti scrawled across a wall in my neighborhood: "Troy Davis was murdered."

Sometimes the very stones cry out.

Nearly a million people worldwide signed Amnesty International's petition urging authorities in Georgia to commute Davis' death sentence.

Davis spent 20 years—nearly half his life—on death row for a crime it's doubtful he committed, and the penal system ground inexorably forward. No one could stop it. Not Davis' family. Not lawyers, protesters, or petition signers. Not the six prison officials who expressed "overwhelming concern that an innocent person could be executed in Georgia." Not the Georgia governor. Not former president Jimmy Carter, nor William Sessions, director of the FBI under President Reagan. Not even the pope. No one.

No one could stop Troy Davis' execution—despite his apparent innocence.

Davis addressed his final words to murder victim Mark MacPhail's family who sat in the front row at the execution. "I know you all are still convinced that I'm the person who killed your father, your son, and your brother—but I am innocent ... I am so sorry for your loss. I really am. Sincerely."

TROY DAVIS COULDN'T get a stay of execution—despite substantial new evidence supporting his innocence—in part because of the federal Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act. The Act was part of the Republican "Contract with America" signed into law in 1996 by President Clinton, who was pushed to bring a speedy and lethal conclusion to domestic terrorist Timothy McVeigh.

Amnesty International poster

Under the Act, "federal courts are unable to grant relief despite meritorious substantive claims, including ... claims of racial bias in jury selection, ineffective assistance of counsel, and prosecutorial misconduct," concludes the Constitution Project, which seeks substantial reform to the act. It reduces capital defendants to one, all-or-nothing, federal appeal. If the real killer publicly confessed and there was conclusive DNA evidence, it wouldn't matter. Once a federal appeal has been denied, the death machinery must grind on. No matter what.

MORE THAN TWO-THIRDS of the countries in the world have abolished the death penalty in law or practice, according to Amnesty International. About one-third of the states, plus the District of Columbia, have abolished capital punishment. Yet the U.S. ranks fifth in the world for number of executions. Texas executes at a rate four times higher than the national average.

If the defendant is African American, the odds of receiving a death sentence are nearly four times higher than if he or she is white.

It's in this context that Davis' lawyer, Thomas Ruffin, declared Davis' execution a "legalized lynching." Racial bias in sentencing, determined the Supreme Court, is permitted as long as there is no "clear evidence of conscious discriminatory intent," summarizes Michelle Alexander in *The New Jim Crow*. "Racial bias would be tolerated—virtually to any degree," she writes, "so long as no one admitted it."

I'M NOT SURE how many ways Americans can conclude that capital punishment is wrong and should be abolished.

Christians who are pro-life embrace a "womb-to-tomb" theology. As Ohio State Rep. Terry Blair, a Republican, puts it, "I don't think we have any business in taking another person's life, even for what we call a legal purpose ... The creeds of the church say that life is to be protected all along, from natural birth to natural death."

Even pro-death penalty, conservative columnist George F. Will writes, "Capital punishment, like the rest of the criminal justice system, is a government program, so skepticism is in order." Rapid-fire TV host John McLaughlin identified the death penalty as "the biggest government waste."

In the moments before Davis was killed, he said to the guards, "To those who are about to take my life, may God have mercy on all of your souls. God bless you all."

What will it take for the U.S. to join the family of nations who have once and for all abolished the death penalty? As Christians we condemn the culture of death. And whether the state uses a cross, a killing chair, or a lethal cocktail, we will choose life. ■

***Rose Marie Berger**, author of the book* Who Killed Donte Manning? *(available at store.sojo.net), is a Catholic peace activist and a* Sojourners *associate editor.*

An Occupy Wall Street protester marches up Broadway in New York City in October.

Reuters

By Robert Hirschfield

AMERICAN **SPRING?**

Finding connections between the past, present, and future at Occupy Wall Street.

"THIS IS THE American Spring," roared Eric Seligson, 65 and a veteran of Students for a Democratic Society, "and I am a born-again revolutionary!"

The man in charge of the Occupy Wall Street library said he'd been waiting years for this day, and that describes the spirit of many of the older people who came to Zuccotti Park in New York City to volunteer by day and be part of the General Assembly meetings at night.

I was one of them. Together, Seligson and I watched the young people spreading out on their sleeping bags, holding up their signs ("Defend Public Health Not Corporate Wealth"), sweeping the grounds. Together, we silently contemplated the mystery of wonder. Was the awakening of America's progressive slumber really happening? Or were we both dreaming the way two old men dream, filling our minds with wistful collages of unfinished business?

I was told that the heroes of Tahrir Square twittered their embrace to the youths

Inside CultureWatch

46 The Good of Manufacturing
Danny Duncan Collum on the "free trade" Great Recession blues

49 Fierce for Peace
Larisa Friesen Hall reviews *And Still Peace Did Not Come* and *Mighty Be Our Powers*

51 Divine Regulation
Lisa Sharon Harper on what God values

of Occupy Wall Street who, on Sept.17, made the financial district their unexpected home after staging a protest against Wall Street greed.

I was struck by how many of the protesters, like their counterparts in Tahrir Square, were unemployed students, first-timers at saying no to their country's power-holders. If nothing else, Occupy Wall Street is a living illustration of one way the First World/Third World dichotomy has narrowed in recent years. Because of the unhappy globalization of joblessness, some in these two worlds are finding themselves on common ground.

Clark Johnson, a soft-spoken 25-year-old graduate of the NYU law school, didn't know quite what to make of my '60s roots. (Like most of the young protesters I spoke with, his reaction was, "Should know more about you than I do. Sorry. But we are trying to make our own revolution here.") He said thoughtfully, "The people in Egypt had no democracy. We have a corrupted democracy. In both countries, young people are fighting for a voice. But no one is sure what that voice will sound like."

ONE GETS A glimpse here of a new culture of resistance in the post-ideological world. It might not have a coherent political orientation. No leaders marched around giving orders. ("In our day," Seligson recalled, "everyone wanted to know what the party line was.") This, in its subtle way, is perhaps one of the strongest statements made at Zuccotti Park (aka Liberty Park): The repudiation of the culture of the leader. The rejection of the notion that power equals wisdom, correctness, a path automatically to be followed.

'Young people are fighting for a voice. But no one is sure what that voice will sound like.'

At the densely packed General Assembly meeting—with its discussions of economic and environmental issues, as well as peace and war—speakers, being without microphones, had to share their authority with the crowd, beginning with those nearest and ending with those furthest away, all of whom ritually repeated their words, serving as a "human microphone" so that everyone could hear.

The underlying questions: Can politics be made new? Can habitual ways of thinking be re-thought?

There are risks involved. Our hearts sink when we see power in Egypt passing from the powerless into the hands of men with agendas (and guns). But as this is written, the Occupy movement, with the media of the world dancing its obsessive dance around it, is still taking its first steps.

I found myself moving with great fascination among the hard hats, the Hasidim, the businessmen in their three-piece suits,

Continued on Page 47

New & Noteworthy

JOKING FOR JESUS

Why so glum? Jesuit James Martin's *Between Heaven and Mirth: Why Joy, Humor, and Laughter Are at the Heart of the Spiritual Life* is a gracious invitation to loosen up a little and balance tears and righteous anger with delight in the God-given gift of laughter. HarperOne

THE COURAGE TO LOVE

The film *Little Town of Bethlehem* follows three men of three different faiths who pursue nonviolence in the midst of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Screening kits and DVD for home viewing are available for purchase. littletownofbethlehem.org

BODY MEETS SOUL

In *See Me Naked: Stories of Sexual Exile in American Christianity*, Amy Frykholm tells nine people's stories of sexual formation and faith, from typical teenage experimentation to being trafficked. It reveals some of Christian culture's failures around human sexuality, while offering tentative hope for a more holy and whole way forward. Beacon Press

RETHINKING WAR

Women, War & Peace, a series that debuted on PBS this fall, is available on DVD. It explores how changes in warfare have placed women at the center of conflicts—increasing their vulnerability and drawing out their leadership in issues of peace and security. Website includes news, podcasts, and educational resources. pbs.org/wnet/women-war-and-peace

BY DANNY DUNCAN COLLUM

The Good of Manufacturing

File photo

HIGH UNEMPLOYMENT and declining incomes are changing America so drastically that we'll soon have a country our grandparents wouldn't even recognize. And our best and brightest lack the imagination to do anything about it.

Those are the messages, overt and implied, in a recent run of brilliant analytical journalism by Don Peck, an editor at *The Atlantic*. In March 2010, *The Atlantic* published Peck's supremely important, and very long, article "How a New Jobless Era Will Transform America." September 2011 brought a follow-up, "Can the Middle Class Be Saved?" and the material in both pieces has been expanded into a book, *Pinched: How the Great Recession Has Narrowed Our Futures and What We Can Do About It.*

In that first *Atlantic* article, Peck successfully does what almost no one ever does: He pulls together the relationship between economics and culture. On the economics side, he establishes that what we are experiencing today is no ordinary "business cycle" recession, but something more like a slow-motion equivalent to the Great Depression. And he cites studies of previous generations that entered the work force in times of high unemployment to show that the effects of the hard times didn't wear off, but instead persisted over a lifetime of lower earnings and diminished happiness.

How blind commitment to 'free trade' throws working people under the bus.

On the culture side, Peck finds that the effects of prolonged joblessness are piling on to previous decades of declining wages in traditionally male-dominated occupations to produce a sea change in family patterns. Marriage is increasingly viewed as a luxury of the affluent, and single motherhood is becoming normal, even in the middle class. This, he claims, is in no small part because of the rapidly diminishing prospects of the high school-educated men who used to fill the manufacturing and construction jobs blown away by the Great Recession. Layoffs have been less severe in the traditionally female occupations such as health care, education, and customer service, and so, increasingly, lower middle-class women find themselves wondering if men are worth the trouble.

Of course, the obvious answer to all the problems Peck identifies is a systematic revival of America's manufacturing economy. It should be self-evident that a healthy, egalitarian society must provide some way for men and women who are so inclined to make a reasonable, dignified living with their hands. Unfortunately, as he shows in his most recent *Atlantic* article, Peck has not a clue about how to revive American manufacturing. He wishes, a bit wistfully, that we could "keep the production of new, high-value goods within American borders for a longer period of time." But in the next breath he asserts as self-evident the liberal creed that "Protectionist measures are generally self-defeating." Elsewhere he reflexively recites the "free trade" truism, "We can't wish away globalization or turn our backs on trade; to try to do so would be crippling and impoverishing."

This is unthinking orthodoxy of the "flat-earth" variety. So-called "protectionist" measures have worked very well for China, India, Brazil, and other emerging economies, and they could work for us. We need the strong arm of a democratic government on America's capital flow, directing investment to productive, nonservice work that will improve life for all of us. Clean energy, conservation, and other infrastructure improvements are only the most obvious starting places for such a re-industrialization campaign. I hate to sound like Rick Perry on global warming, but we really can't afford to toss more than half our people under the bus out of allegiance to an unproven (economic) theory about "free trade." ■

Danny Duncan Collum *teaches writing at Kentucky State University in Frankfort. Find out about his novel,* White Boy, *and more at www.dannyduncancollum.net.*

Continued from Page 45

all stopping by to look, to listen, to take in this phenomenon.

Why the fascination? It was due in part no doubt to the sheer strangeness of the American Left behaving as if it is actually a legitimate part of the national landscape. But it is not just that. It was what Allen Ginsberg would call the Prince Myshkin factor of innocence. Free pizza, apples, oranges, bread, and potato salad crammed the food table. There was a free outdoor barber shop.

Reuters

Was the awakening of America's progressive slumber really happening?

Even a free newspaper: *The Occupied Wall Street Journal.*

On the ground was a paper plate with money on it. Around the edges of the plate was written: "If You Have Money Give Some. If You Need Money Take Some." This was the movement's '60s DNA kicking in. Playful on the surface, but serious beneath. The place was half-Woodstock, half Tahrir Square, Athens, and Tel Aviv combined.

Rev. Earl Kooperkamp of St. Mary's Episcopal Church in Harlem had a different take: "This is my vision of what the Kingdom of God looks like. These people are willing to stand up and say that things are not right. This is a fallen system and needs to be redeemed."

The young people took in stride the transference of political energy from Europe and the Middle East to themselves. They were all aware of it, and it pleased them, but

BY GAREth HIGGINS

George Clooney and Ryan Gosling in The Ides of March

A FEW GOOD **MEN**

GEORGE CLOONEY IS a rare star—as good-looking as Cary Grant, as committed to social activism as Michael Moore. He's willing to use his cultural power for something more than the lucrative repetition of a blockbuster bloody alien invasion artistic travesty every other summer. Instead, Clooney's films are often meaty explorations of truth-telling and the common good. *Good Night, and Good Luck* is an indictment of media distortion; *Solaris* reflects the meaning of love and grief and the spaces in between; and his TV version of *Fail Safe* (aired in 2000) warns against the consequences of backing up international relations with the threat of nuclear attack.

Clooney's new movie, **The Ides of March**, serves as a thoughtful and entertaining mirror for next year's presidential election. Like Robert Redford's *Lions for Lambs*, it presents policies we could believe in (Clooney's candidate offers realistic ways to reverse climate change and reduce the threat of terrorism—and is wise enough to realize that these may actually be two sides of a coin). *Ides* also seeks to transcend partisanship by avoiding a rose-tinted vision of secular liberalism, and it challenges the mythological hypocrisy that goads the public to permit almost any bad behavior from a president (war, execution, economic degradation) as long as he at least pretends to maintain moral Puritanism in private life.

The Ides of March is a smart, disturbing film, and an invitation to ask if we have reached rock bottom in our politics—which may be the best place from which to work for change.

In other fall movies, Ryan Gosling, the protagonist in *Ides*, is the lead in **Drive**, a fantastically stylish thriller about the pointlessness of speed and style for its own sake. It's a violent film, but doesn't pretend that violence is fun. The same goes for **Warrior**, which seeks to redeem American masculinity by imagining a middle ground between aggression and cowardice. It's a moving cry for help for a generation of fatherless men trying to live for more than revenge.

Meanwhile, **Moneyball** is a classy light drama about baseball that somehow avoids the cliché of swelling orchestral strings when the final pitch results in revelation. It's about living where you are and being your finest self. This is also the heart of **The Guard**, a quality dark comedy about redeeming a nation's missteps. In *The Guard* the nation is Ireland, in *The Ides of March* it's the U.S., but both are universal stories. They communicate that the most important power a human being has is the ability to choose the next step. And the next. And the next. ■

***Gareth Higgins** is a* Sojourners *contributing editor and executive director of the Wild Goose Festival. Originally from Northern Ireland, he lives in Durham, North Carolina.*

Scenes from Occupy Wall Street in New York City.

Catholics United

Photos by Reuters

no one was sure what direction the movement will take if and when the encampment is closed down. They talked of taking their resistance back to their communities, but they were not specific about what that might mean. They said that the spirit of what has begun would not be undone. They spoke like people of a new faith.

Sometimes parties of protesters set out with their signs through the streets of the business district. One sign attached to a young body read: "I Owe Sallie Mae $25,000." Another sign trumped that: "I Owe Sallie Mae $50,000." That sign belonged to Gemma, 24, once a fine arts student at SUNY Purchase, now an activist, with close-cropped brown hair. "I am out of work and I can't pay back my loan. Something's got to be done. I am in this to the end."

Occupy Wall Street has been accused of not articulating its demands, as if demands somehow equal legitimacy. For now, the movement is still too small for its demands to matter. But its most prominent public assertion says it all: "We are the 99% that will no longer tolerate the greed and corruption of the 1%."

The General Assembly echoes an early institution of '60s radicalism: Berkeley's Free Speech Movement. It may lack the hypnotic oratory of Mario Savio, but what it provides is an uninhibited and reverberating forum for views to be expressed.

I heard a woman utter words I never thought I'd ever hear again in a public place: "We should not end the wars to save money. We should end the wars because they are morally reprehensible."

The words were repeated from one end of Liberty Park to the other like an anthem. ■

***Robert Hirschfield** is a New York City-based freelance writer.*

Getty Images

Nobel peace laureate Leymah Gbowee

Reviewed by Larisa Friesen Hall

FIERCE FOR **PEACE**

Mighty Be Our Powers: How Sisterhood, Prayer, and Sex Changed a Nation at War, by Leymah Gbowee with Carol Mithers. Beast Books.

And Still Peace Did Not Come: A Memoir of Reconciliation, by Agnes Fallah Kamara-Umunna and Emily Holland. Hyperion.

TWO LIBERIAN WOMEN defy the traditional media narrative of violent conflict, which all too often focuses on men who are fighting as the center of the story. In their recent books, Leymah Gbowee (a 2011 Nobel Peace Prize recipient) and Agnes Fallah Kamara-Umunna turn this notion on its head and tell their stories of surviving 14 years of civil war. They are not victims, but central figures in bringing peace and reconciliation to their country.

In *Mighty Be Our Powers*, Gbowee tells the story of women learning about and fighting for their human rights and becoming architects of peace in war-torn Liberia. In 1990, Gbowee had just graduated top of her high school class and begun studies at the University of Liberia with dreams of becoming a doctor. Then the war broke out and life and her dreams became unraveled and unrecognizable.

As the horror dragged on, Gbowee became involved in peace-building and conflict resolution and transformation. Even as she balanced life as a mother of six children, she worked as a trauma counselor, visiting villages in Liberia where terrible things had taken place and helping people to tell their stories. This dialogue created awareness and helped people to find solutions and work toward conflict resolution.

She eventually brought women together from all walks of life, both Christians and Muslims, to demand an end to the war. Their slogan became, "Does the bullet know Christian from Muslim? Does the bullet choose?" These women announced their alliance with a 200-person march in Monrovia, in which they alternated singing Muslim songs and Christian hymns. They later staged a sit-in until they convinced then-Liberian leader Charles Taylor and the rebel leaders to sit down to peace talks.

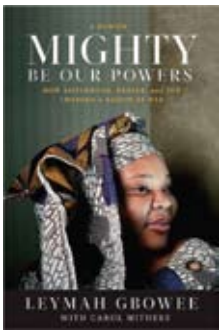
> 'Does the bullet know Christian from Muslim? Does the bullet choose?'

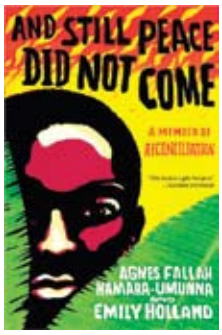
However, the peace talks were ineffective. The fighting across Liberia became worse until at last the Liberian women's

movement, led by Gbowee, had enough. They surrounded the building housing the talks and refused to allow those negotiating to come or go or have access to food or water until they moved the peace process forward. It was the catalyst for the end of the war.

Mighty Be Our Powers is the story of a woman who led the women of Liberia to make history by organizing for peace. Gbowee eventually earned a master's in conflict transformation at Eastern Mennonite University in Harrisonburg, Virginia. Nobel peace laureate Gbowee now continues her work based in Ghana as the executive director of the Women Peace and Security Network Africa.

READING *AND STILL Peace Did Not Come* is like meeting Agnes Fallah Kamara-Umunna face to face, listening to her voice as she shares her life story. She survived the Liberian civil war mostly in exile in Sierra Leone while her father traveled back and





forth, risking his life working as a World Health Organization doctor. Following the war, Kamara-Umunna's radio program *Straight from the Heart* became a vital tool for reconciliation through storytelling. Kamara-Umunna's gift for drawing out stories from people on all sides of their experiences in the conflict revealed the complexity of war and the paradox of victims who were perpetrators and perpetrators who were also victims.

This was most apparent among the child soldiers. When he addressed the Liberian Truth and Reconciliation Commission, one of the former child combatants stated, "We have experienced the most bloody historical transformation of our political structure involving 90 percent of our youth, who were used as agents of death and destruction by unpatriotic citizens of this country for 14 unbroken years ... We would like the word to go forth that the youth of this country will never be used to kill and destroy our beloved citizens and country again."

Kamara-Umunna details how she developed relationships with these discarded children after the war, inviting them to share their stories on her radio program, helping them reunite with their families, starting a youth center, and working courageously to help build their hope for a future in the new Liberia. ■

***Larisa Friesen Hall** is director of major gifts at Sojourners.*

Real

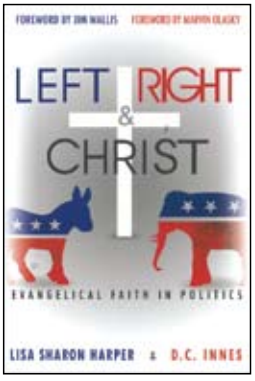
Candler School of Theology prepares **real** people to make a **real** difference in the **real** world. Here, students are transformed into Christian leaders who put faith and love into action. One example? They minister in both social/clinical and ecclesial settings for two years, so they're ready to serve wherever God leads. See more **real** examples at *www.candler.emory.edu/sojo*

EMORY
CANDLER SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY
Atlanta, Georgia

EXCERPT *by Lisa Sharon Harper*

DIVINE **REGULATION**

What is valued in God's economy?



JESUS STANDS IN his hometown synagogue. He is handed the scroll. He unrolls it, finds Isaiah 61 and reads:

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.

Jesus rolls up the scroll, sits down and says, "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." *In other words, you know how Isaiah said one day someone would proclaim these things. Well I just did! It's on. The year of the Lord's favor is on!*

The Year of Jubilee (Leviticus 25:8-55) was the centerpiece of an economic system instituted by God as the Israelites entered the Promised Land. In this system every seven years the Israelites were commanded to observe the Sabbatical year (Leviticus 25:1-7, Deuteronomy 15:1-18). During this year, all debts were forgiven, slaves were set free, and the land was given rest from all sowing and reaping. In this theocratic agrarian society, Sabbatical year was a major regulatory act that imposed a yearlong cycle of rest for workers and the land in addition to the weekly Sabbath, which God instituted through the Ten Commandments. The Sabbatical year also affected merchants' bottom lines. The cost of labor is a key factor in the ability of business to make a profit. Thus the command to free their slaves every seven years would have a profound effect on the ability of businesses to expand profits beyond modest margins.

The Year of Jubilee came at the end of seven seven-year cycles. In the 50th year, not only would debts be forgiven, slaves freed, and the land given rest, but also all land was returned to its original deed-holders, effectively banning outright the sale of land and only allowing land to be leased for 50 years or less.

This government regulation reinforced the view among the Israelites that natural resources belong to God, not to humanity. We are simply the stewards of land entrusted to us temporarily by God.

It also created conditions that would prevent any Israelite household from falling into multigenerational poverty. After 49 years, even the most destitute would reclaim the land given to their ancestors as they entered the Promised Land. The Year of Jubilee functioned as an

Send Christmas cards that show you care.

Bread for the World cards help end hunger.

Order today
www.bread.org/go/cards

breadfortheworld
HAVE FAITH. END HUNGER.
www.bread.org

Keep the Flame Burning...

Your end-of-year contribution to Sojourners will help us inspire hope for those who need it the most in the coming year.

As 2011 comes to a close, we look back at a year in which hope struggled to triumph over cynicism, politics, and natural disasters. With your help Sojourners will keep working to bring hope to policymakers, political leaders, ecumenical communities, low-income people, and those who need it the most. Through Sojourners' work for social justice, we share with the world the hope of Christmas and the enormous social and political power that it has.

Donate at www.sojo.net/Give2011,
or send your year-end donation to:
Sojourners Development Department
3333 14th Street NW, Suite 200
Washington, DC 20010.

Questions? Call 1-800-714-7474 or
email donate@sojo.net.

equalizing reset button among the Israelites, preventing the accumulation of gross wealth and the entrenchment of gross poverty.

While the United States is not a theocracy, [ancient] Israel's Year of Jubilee offers a useful picture of the priorities within God's economy. In God's economy, unlimited business growth is not an expectation. Rather, God imposes regulations on the business sector that prevent growth from producing mini-empires. In God's economy, the well-being of workers and the land matters. God's regulations limit exploitation and offer conditions conducive to flourishing by providing Sabbath and Sabbatical-year rest for workers and the land and by offering Jubilee debt forgiveness for all those enslaved to pay off debt. In God's economy, there is no interest on loans to fellow Israelites (Deuteronomy 23:19). In God's economy, private individual ownership of land does not exist. Rather, land is owned by God alone and exists for the common good of all the people and of the wild animals that live there (Leviticus 25:1-7).

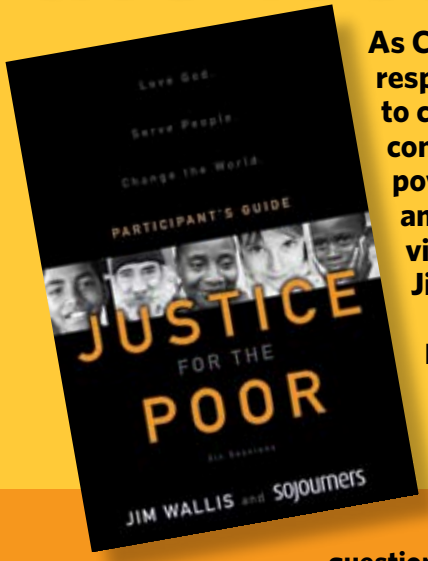
We are simply the stewards of land entrusted to us temporarily by God.

This is what God's dominion looks like. This is what Jesus announced as he read the Isaiah 61 prophecy in that Nazarene synagogue (Luke 4). The Year of Jubilee and the reign of God were at hand, and they stood in direct opposition to the kind of dominion practiced by King Herod and the Roman Empire. Jesus declares a divine revolt against the unjust systems and seditious priorities of human kingdoms. In Jesus' proclamation we see that the dominion of God prioritizes the disenfranchised, the marginalized, the oppressed, and the poor. And we see, above all else, that Jesus has come so that the image of God might flourish in people, not the image of earthly kings on coins. ■

Excerpted from Left, Right, & Christ: Evangelical Faith in Politics, *by Lisa Sharon Harper & D.C. Innes, with permission from Russell Media. Copyright 2011. All rights reserved.*

FROM THE EDITORS OF SOJOURNERS

Love God. Serve people.
Change the world.



As Christians, how should we respond to poverty? Learn to connect biblical faith with contemporary responses to poverty, in your neighborhood and around the world, with this video-based group study from Jim Wallis and Sojourners.

DVD features six 20-minute video sessions and includes a leader's guide. Participants' guides are also available.

Six sessions, each including questions for discussion, Bible study, and group activities:

1. Burger King Mom—Being Poor in America
2. Is There Something Wrong with the Prosperity Gospel?
3. Standing at the Corner of Church and State
4. The Gospel According to New Orleans
5. The Poor and the Global Economy
6. From Serial Charity to a Just Society

Insightful, engaging, and motivating. Jim Wallis is at his best as teacher, pastor, and prophet.

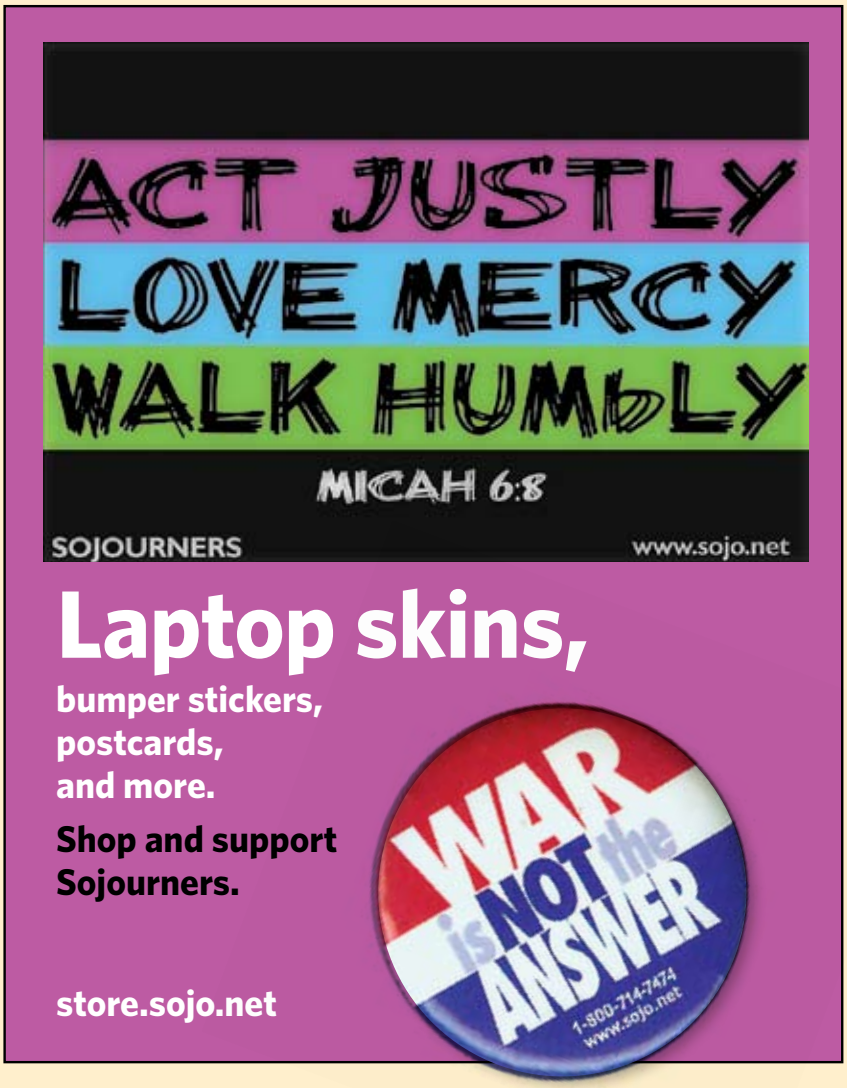
Available at store.sojo.net or call 1-800-714-7474.

MARKETPLACE

■ **DEATH AND TAXES.** Want to stop paying for war? 30-minute DVD, $10 each. Checks to NWTRCC, PO Box 150553, Brooklyn, NY 11215, or nwtrcc.org/deathandtaxes.php.

■ **ONLINE SPIRITUAL APPAREL.** Grand Opening! All merchandise 5%-35% OFF. More than a clothing line ... we're a movement. www.zazzle.com/vitalvirtues*

TO PLACE A MARKETPLACE AD
Contact Sojourners at 1-800-714-7474, ext. 639; classifieds@sojo.net; or Sojourners Advertising, 3333 14th Street NW, Suite 200, Washington, DC 20010. Rates (per word): $2 for 1X; $1.80 for 3X; $1.60 for 6X.



CultureWatch

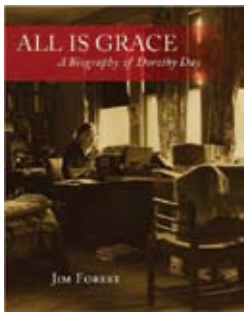
BOOKS ART MUSIC FILM

Reviewed by Rosalie Riegle

A LIFE OF SPIRITUAL **ADVENTURE**

All is Grace: A Biography of Dorothy Day, by Jim Forest. Orbis Books.

DOROTHY DAY HEARD the call of God. This new biography shows clearly and with fascinating detail how this call, once heard, was lived out in a life of adventure, both spiritual and world-filled. Written by her co-Worker and friend Jim Forest and greatly expanded from his 1986 biography of the indefatigable founder of the Catholic Worker, this book will delight both those who feel they know Day from her writings and those meeting her for the first time in its pages.



Included are more than 200 photos, many published here for the first time. Also of interest are sidebars quoting Day's writings, including her recently available diaries and letters (see *Sojourners*, August 2008 and March 2011).

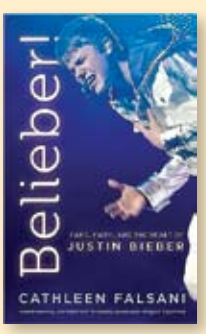
It's all there: Her birth in Brooklyn, surviving the San Francisco earthquake, her teenage years in Chicago and at the University of Illinois, her defiance in becoming a journalist against her father's wishes, her love affairs—both tragic and happy—and finally her conversion after the birth of her daughter, Tamar. We read of her meeting Peter Maurin and how they began to publish *The Catholic Worker* and from there to found a lay movement. People who only know the public Day—her hospitality, her standing up for the downtrodden and against U.S. militarism—will find especially endearing the stories of her young years when she struggled to find a place for her writing talents, when she loved deeply and sometimes unwisely, and when she searched for a way to be a Christian single parent after leaving the father of her child. Others will resonate with her waning years, when her outward travels were curtailed and she sometimes felt herself a prisoner of an aging body.

Yes, Day's life was a passionate adventure

as she struggled to articulate a radical gospel to both a complacent Roman Catholic Church and a culture where few shared her unswerving pacifism. Recounted in *All is Grace* are her many outward journeys, to England and Ireland and Russia and to Rome to lobby for peace at the Second Vatican Council, meeting Mother Teresa, visiting the many Catholic Worker communities across the U.S. But her most important adventure was the spiritual journey, as her faith deepened and broadened through constant prayer. This prayer helped her to surmount many difficulties, some neglected in Forest's narrative, such as the controversy generated by the retreats given by Fr. Pacifique Roy and later by Fr. John Hugo during the '40s. These retreats reinforced her conviction, learned from Maurin, that "followers of Jesus should not ignore the more demanding aspects of the gospel." Some in the movement and in her family saw this as her being overly scrupulous, but Day saw it as grace and bedrock.

Again and again in this beautiful biography, we see the core of Day—her deep love of God and her unwavering ability to see God in those the world shuns. As Forest writes in the "personal remembrance" that ends the biography, "Dorothy has helped us better understand one of the primary biblical truths: that each person, no matter how damaged or battered by the events and circumstances of life, is a bearer of the image of God and deserves to be recognized as such." That lesson, lived over and over again in her long and adventurous life, continues to challenge us to change the face of America. ■

Rosalie Riegle *has written several books on the Catholic Worker, including* Dorothy Day: Portraits by Those Who Knew Her.



FROM OUR STAFF

Believer!: Fame, Faith, and the Heart of Justin Bieber, by Sojourners web editor Cathleen Falsani. Worthy Publishing.

The Gift that Keeps on Giving

This Christmas, give the gift that keeps on giving to your child, spouse, pastor, or any loved one. Sojourners' work articulates the biblical call to social justice in our world.

Make a donation to Sojourners in honor of your loved one! We will notify them of your generosity. Visit www.sojo.net/giftofhope or send your year-end donation to: Sojourners, 3333 14th Street NW, Suite 200, Washington, DC 20010. Donate before December 16 to ensure that the notification card makes it to your loved one before Christmas.

Please call Emanuel or Elisabeth at 1-800-714-7474 with any questions.

Merry Christmas from Sojourners

2 gifts

for the price of 1

Buy a gift subscription to *Sojourners* magazine for $39.95 and get a second one FREE.

- Save some real money—$39.95, to be exact.
- It's hassle-free—just call 1-800-678-9691 and say you want the 2-for-1 deal.
- Your gift subscription lasts all year long.
- Your gifts support Sojourners and our work for justice and peace.

Say "Merry Christmas" with a meaningful gift—order your gift subscriptions today. **Call 1-800-678-9691.**

BY ENUMA OKORO

Bearing the 'Wait' of the Word

THE WORD OF GOD is steadfast and faithful. This is the promise and the witness of scripture. We are called to remember this promise. God is active in history and in our local and global communities, offering mercy that both comforts and baffles us. The Word of God speaks of restoration. It lives fully into its covenantal relationships. It offers a peace too deep and wide for anything less than poetry to hint at it. The Word of God is the stuff of visions and dreams. It is the calling of prophets. It is the witness of disciples. It fosters unlikely relationships. It is a transformation that requires patience and painful self-assessment. The Word invites us to mimic God's healing care. It is *for* us and *beyond* us. It extends to those we would rather not think about or be concerned with. The Word of God is the fulfillment of all hope, all longing, and all waiting. As such, this Word demands preparation.

In the season of Advent we dwell on what it means to bear the "wait" of the Word. What does preparation look like? How do we encourage one another to wait faithfully? How do we receive God's comfort when it may not seem like enough for our present circumstances? What or whom are we tempted to mistake for the Light because we are so desperate to be restored from an illness so few of us even recognize we have?

***Enuma Okoro**, of Durham, North Carolina, is the author of* Reluctant Pilgrim *and co-author of* Common Prayer: A Liturgy for Ordinary Radicals.

[DECEMBER 4]

A Posture of Waiting

Isaiah 40:1-11; Psalm 85:1-2, 8-13; 2 Peter 3:8-15a; Mark 1:1-8

WAITING IS NEVER easy, even when we wait for something good. Often we pace around and wring our hands, or worry about all that could go wrong. Maybe we think that waiting is a waste of time; that we are better off taking matters into our own hands.

It is wise to test the rhetoric of those who claim to speak for God, whether from the pulpit or the political podium.

Advent's lessons offer us an alternate posture in challenging times. There are few better ways to begin than with the covenantal language of Isaiah, "Comfort, O comfort my people, says your God" (40:1). Sit quietly with these words; grasp their potency. They point the Israelites—and, by grace and extension, us—to remember that their identity and future rests with God, the One who is merciful and mighty. The Israelites may have forgotten, as we so often do, the awesomeness of the One for whom they wait, the One whose shalom is so richly dense and abundant that the psalmist can barely contain it in poetic imagery (Psalm 85:10-13).

Yet, even when God's prophets bring a good and hopeful word, there is still a response required on our part. Inherent in good news is a call to turn toward the one who invites. These texts invite listeners to trust in and wait on God's coming restoration of all creation. Part of waiting involves preparing oneself in a manner suitable to receive the fullness of God's restoration. Preparation takes time. It is to our benefit that Peter suggests God's patience and God's sense of time are nothing like ours (2 Peter 3:8-13). It requires time to do the necessary communal and internal self-assessment that might lead us to the confession and repentance John the Baptist speaks of (Mark 1:4-5).

[DECEMBER 11]

Our Waiting Rooms Speak Volumes

Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11; Psalm 126; 1 Thessalonians 5:16-24; John 1:6-8, 19-28

OUR POSTURE OF waiting is defined by whether we truly believe we are waiting for something that will not disappoint or mislead us. Any authentic practice of rejoicing always and giving thanks in all things, as Paul instructs the Thessalonian church (1 Thessalonians 5:16, 18), must be built on the belief that the One who is to come wants what is best for us. All around us we see systemic injustices perpetuated by greed for land or resources. It is hard to hold fast to a long-lasting belief in the restoration of creation without a community of encouragement, which is a living witness to that hope by the ways in which it practices and enacts God's ongoing care.

Recognizing and attending to the oppressed, the brokenhearted, captives, and prisoners (see Isaiah 61:1) is an essential way we prepare for the coming of God. One temptation we face is wanting others to see *us* as the light, rather than as *witnesses* to the Light. John's gospel extends a beautiful invitation to join in the work of God, but it also warns not to mistake ourselves or others for the Messiah. It is wise to test the rhetoric of those who claim to speak for God, whether from the pulpit or the political podium.

True prophets offer us painfully beautiful and challenging ways to live into our holy transformation. Despite the traditional gloom and doom attributed to prophets, they are good dreamers. We are well served to follow Paul's advice to "not despise the words of the prophets" (1 Thessalonians 5:20) because prophets trust in the words and visions of God. The psalmist says, "When the Lord restored the fortunes of Zion, we were like those who dream ..." (Psalm 126:1). Not only are dreamers full of hope with vivid imaginations, but they also open up a scripturally affirmed channel for divine communication. When God imparts a prophetic word of hope and restoration, it affects the larger community. God's transforming work is so full and expansive that it seeps out to bear witness and to restore lives in the most unlikely places. Our job is not to determine who is restored.

[DECEMBER 18]

Where is God's Waiting Place?

2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16; Psalm 89:1-4, 19-26; Romans 16:25-27; Luke 1:26-38

WHENEVER WE GET comfortable in life we are tempted to flip the script on God, to start calling the shots. These texts remind us that we *follow* God. The Creator does not follow us. Leaders' best intentions ought to be checked by God's standards and principles. Be wary of the leader who decides a course of action and then gives it God's stamp of approval.

In 2 Samuel 7, the prophet Nathan gave King David an unreflective and immediate "yes" in response to David's desire to build God a house. But sometimes prophets have to check themselves and make sure their words align with the heart of God. David's desire is replete with theological and political ramifications. God has no interest in settling in the suburbs now that King David has "arrived," so to speak. The God of the Israelites is a God on the move. God sets the tone for how the Israelites live—not the other way around. David is only politically successful because God is faithful and enables it and because God has a much bigger purpose in mind. Nathan has to go back to David and tell the king to wait. God initiated this covenant and God has other plans. David wants to build a temple. God wants to build an eternal dynasty forged in God's earth-shattering shalom.

In Romans 16 we witness God's faithfulness to God's promise. Jesus is the fulfillment of shalom, who was born of Mary and Spirit, and who will come again as Savior. The emphasis is on God's work, not humans, not kings, presidents, or clergy. As the psalmist sings, it is God who blesses, equips, and establishes. It is God whom we praise and worship. Our readings begin with a comfortable king who desires to build God a house. They end with a poor unwed girl's willingness to house the Son of God in her very body (Luke 1). There is beauty and gift in being portals of God when, in humility and vulnerability, we recognize ourselves as servants not masters, and as utterly dependant on God.

[DECEMBER 25]

Waiting Requires Trust

Isaiah 9:2-7; Psalm 96; Titus 2:11-14; Luke 2:1-20

IT IS CHRISTMAS. The child is born. Now what? What has changed? Is the waiting over? The task—of prophets, leaders, dreamers, and those who choose to believe in the promise of God's unimaginable gifts—is to trust. Whether or not Isaiah 9 speaks to the birth of Hezekiah or foretells the birth of the Christ child, the point is that the reigning Judean King Ahaz is invited to put his trust in God and not in his own fearful schemes. It is difficult to trust God when issues are pressing and time seems of the essence. It is doubly hard when seemingly ready, albeit less than perfect, solutions are at hand. King Ahaz chose to ignore Isaiah and joined forces with neighboring enemies for military might. Waiting is hard. As we celebrate Christmas we also recognize that all of us are still waiting on something, often desperately: a job, health care, a child to return, family to accept us, leaders we can depend on—the list is endless.

> Waiting is never easy, even when we wait for something good.

How do we join with the psalmist in declaring "God's glory among the nations, his marvelous works among all the peoples," while we continue to wait? We return to Mary, the one who has just delivered the child; the one who still recognizes that even though God's word has come to pass, there is still so much more coming and more to be discerned. Mary is the one who continues to hear of good news yet to come and who chooses to "treasure all these words and ponder them in her heart" (Luke 2:19). Because Mary knows God is faithful, she is willing to continue the difficult task of trusting. Even the ongoing waiting period is a gift of time eliciting a response from us (Titus 2:12). ■

"Preaching the Word," *Sojourners' online resource for sermon preparation and Bible study, is available at www.sojo.net/ptw.*

SUMMER 2012

- **The Economics of Global Poverty**
  Christopher Barrett
  July 9–12, 2012
- **Globalization & Worship**
  Charles Farhadian
  July 23-August 3, 2012
- **Religion, Modernity, and the Hermeneutics of Science**
  Peter Harrison
  July 8–21, 2012
- **Singing What We Believe**
  Bert Polman
  June 18–22, 2012
- ***Communitas*: A Visiting Scholars Program**—Four consecutive weeks between June 25 and July 27, 2012

For more information please visit ***www.calvin.edu/scs***.

Contact Seminars @ Calvin
E-mail: seminars@calvin.edu
Phone: (616) 526-8558
Fax: (616) 526-6682

For application information: ***www.calvin.edu/scs***
Application deadline: Feb. 1, 2012

Calvin College
Grand Rapids
Michigan

Seminars @ CALVIN

MAKE A STATEMENT
WEAR SOJOURNERS
FRIEND OF AN IMMIGRANT
T-SHIRT

and add your voice of compassion to the work for comprehensive immigration reform. $10, plus shipping and handling.

Available only at **store.sojo.net**

BY ED SPIVEY JR.

Chicken Run

Ken Davis

AFTER FOUR TRIPS to Honduras—enough time to meet the rigorous standards of scientific data gathering—I can finally conclude that roosters do not crow to greet the dawn, except by coincidence. It turns out they also crow the minute before dawn, and the minute after, and subsequently every minute for the rest of the day.

I observed this phenomenon mainly during the early morning hours, when most humans would expect a few hours of invigorating sleep. My bedroom window was above the local meeting place for area roosters who, unlike their American kindred, do not start their day on a rooftop, silhouetted by the rising sun, before providing the stern but compassionate guidance their broods depend on. Nope. They mainly just hang out and crow. Repeatedly.

Sadly, I saw many young chickens wandering around who clearly could have benefited from adult leadership. But their long-suffering mothers were too harried to provide it, so the young chicks lacked the role models so critical to today's youth. So, after much study, I must reluctantly conclude that Honduran roosters have no observable domestic skills or duties.

This is not one of those "theories" like gravity or evolution, which scientists on the Kansas school board have responsibly debunked. No, this is objective fact. I know this because, like Jane Goodall and her mountain gorillas, I "lived among them" for a whole week. They emitted a constant annoying background noise—similar to the music of Enya—that provided the soundtrack to each evening's sleeplessness.

They could have done something more productive, such as pecking sense into the local tarantula population, although I realize this is a long shot, since tarantulas have no natural enemies except military-grade munitions.

I mention this because early in my visit I observed an adult tarantula crawling up an interior wall of my place of residence. As you may know, tarantulas are members of the arachnid family, although they differ from others of their species by being the size of a small cow. I had earlier seen spiders in the shower, but felt no significant concern, my mind being more occupied by the wire connecting the shower head to a nearby electrical outlet. (Despite being a poor country, Honduras has bathroom technology more advanced than our own. Hot water is supplied instantly by a heater built into the shower head and, depending on the skills of the unlicensed electrician who installed it, provides a surprisingly pleasant shower with only a 30 percent chance that it will be your last.)

To be concerned about most types of bugs in the shower, I would have to see many of them, and on several occasions. But with tarantulas, even a single sighting makes a strong impression. It focuses the mind. The fact that I did not see the tarantula again for the remainder of my visit had no effect on my preoccupation that on any given morning I would be found in my bed with bite marks covering my bloodlessly pale and withered body.

But enough about how I look in beach wear. On the bright side, sharing a house with a dangerous arachnid provides a curative for nights when I struggled to get sleep. With tarantulas you give up on sleep altogether. Problem solved.

I would lay in bed with my eyes open, the room bathed in the light of every available lamp, with my hand gripping the baseball bat my host had thoughtfully provided. This was the same host that had casually mentioned the room's last occupant had been stung by a scorpion. Twice. But it was a young scorpion, she assured me, and death only comes from the stings of adult scorpions, which I was pretty sure that young scorpion had become by then. (Scorpions, by the way, are also members of the arachnid family, a family that has a body count similar to the Sopranos, but with fewer Emmys.)

At least I think my host was talking about scorpions. My Spanish is a bit imperfect. In fact, when I later attempted to compliment her for keeping a great kitchen, she thanked me, but then pointed out she didn't have a pig, much less a fat one. ■

Tarantulas are not insects. They're arachnids. Really big ones.

Ed Spivey Jr. *is art director of* Sojourners.

As the angel proclaimed to the shepherds in Luke 2:12,

"You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."

So have the Maryknoll Sisters found in their ministries with children through the world. Give the gift of hope to so many children this Christmas by supporting us in these and other countries.

www.maryknollsisters.org/xmas11

1912 - Maryknoll Sisters - 2012

Making God's Love Visible

NOT PLAYING IN MOST PULPITS.

IF YOU'VE EVER WALKED OUT OF CHURCH THINKING THIS CAN'T BE THE WHOLE STORY, NOW YOU CAN HEAR THE LEADING VOICES OF PROGRESSIVE CHRISTIANITY TELL IT LIKE YOU'VE NEVER HEARD IT BEFORE.

Living the Questions 2.0 Home Edition brings together 35 highly acclaimed scholars, theologians and other experts at the top of their game in a video exploration of an open, inclusive, broad-minded Christianity.

Already utilized by thousands of progressive Christian communities around the world, LtQ2 is now available in a Home Edition for personal use. All twenty-one 20-minute episodes are included on three DVD discs. Each episode offers examples of concrete spiritual practice and suggestions for social justice engagement.

Featuring:
Marcus Borg
Diana Butler Bass
Walter Brueggemann
John B. Cobb, Jr.
John Dominic Crossan
Matthew Fox
Amy-Jill Levine
Brian McLaren
Robin Meyers
Helen Prejean
Mel White

Ideal for Christmas gift-giving.

75% OFF

LIMITED TIME OFFER!
Home Edition

Regular $100 Now $25
$8 Shipping & Handling
Expires Dec. 15, 2011
Coupon code: S1275LQ
Discount only at livingthequestions.com

"A gift to all Christians desiring to explore progressive Christian faith and practice."
– Rev. Eric Elnes, PhD
Countryside Community Church, Omaha, Nebraska

LIVING THE QUESTIONS
livingthequestions.com